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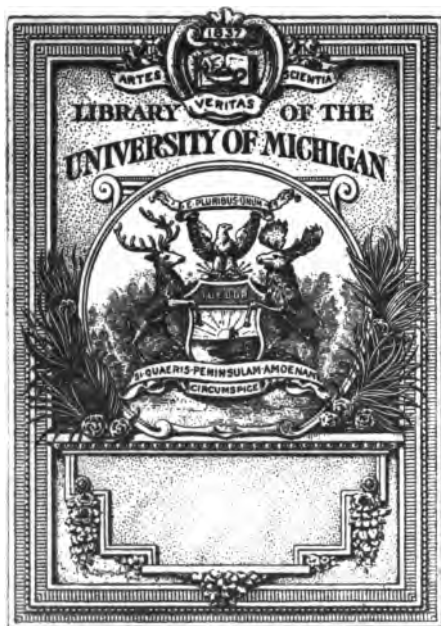
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COLLECTION  
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VOL. 4027.

CHASTELARD AND MARY STUART.

BY  
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

IN ONE VOLUME.

**TAUCHNITZ EDITION.**

**By the same Author,**

**ATALANTA IN CALYDON, AND LYRICAL POEMS . . . 1 vol.**  
**LOVE'S CROSS-CURRENTS . . . . . 1 vol.**

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CHASTELARD  
AND  
MARY STUART

TWO TRAGEDIES

BY  
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE  
AUTHOR OF "ATALANTA IN CALYDON," ETC.

*COPYRIGHT EDITION*

LEIPZIG  
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1908.



Au milieu de l'avril, entre les lys naquit  
Son corps, qui de blancheur les lys mêmes vainquit;  
Et les roses, qui sont du sang d'Adonis teintes,  
Furent par sa couleur de leur vermeil dépeintes.

*Ronsard.*

What need ye hech ! and how ! ladies?  
What need ye how ! for me?  
Ye never saw grace at a graceless face ;  
Queen Mary has nane to gie.

*The Queen's Marie.*

© 1914 Mar 11 E. S.

I DEDICATE THIS PLAY,  
AS A PARTIAL EXPRESSION OF REVERENCE  
AND GRATITUDE,  
TO THE CHIEF OF LIVING POETS;  
TO THE FIRST DRAMATIST OF HIS AGE;  
TO THE GREATEST EXILE, AND THEREFORE  
TO THE GREATEST MAN OF FRANCE;  
TO  
VICTOR HUGO.



## CHASTELARD AND MARY STUART.

THE readers of "Atalanta in Calydon: and Lyrical Poems," by Mr. Swinburne, published some years ago in this series, have been long asking for a companion volume containing specimens of the poet's work of a more purely dramatic kind.

In order to explain the place given to this poet by English critics as an inventor of harmonies, it seems necessary to say a word or two upon the subject of English metres generally. It would be no exaggeration to affirm that in the 18th century one or two poets only ventured upon any metrical excursions outside the metres which custom had clothed with authority—authority so great that those metres were almost held to be sacred by the critic. And among the poets themselves it seems to have been an axiom, save by Collins and Gray, that to invent any more English metres was next to an impossibility.

And even in the century that followed, until Coleridge's unpublished "Christabel" fragment inspired Scott and then Byron to write in irregular octosyllables,

it was almost always in the old metres that the "Georgian poets" wrote. With regard to Shelley, "The Skylark," and other lyrics do undoubtedly show a fine metrical invention. Again in the "Ode to the West Wind," by breaking up into fourteen-line stanzas the *terza rima* of Dante, and thereby altering its character entirely, Mr. Swinburne's metrical invention is equally made manifest. Still, it was in the old accredited and much laboured forms that such masterpieces as "Epipsychidion," and "The Revolt of Islam" were written. Of Keats again it must be said that, structurally considered, his superb odes are in the simplest variations in iambic ten-syllable lines of the old metres. Indeed, among all the group who inaugurated that great "Renascence of Wonder" which I have discussed in the introduction to "Aylwin," it was Coleridge alone who in the evolution of the new Romantic impulse showed great metrical invention.

Then arose Tennyson. One of this great master's early triumphs was considered to be that he could invent metres. And a few metres he undoubtedly did invent, working in them admirably, though perhaps not quite so admirably as he worked in the orthodox measures of his predecessors. In the lilting alexandrines of "Maud," there is much fine invention. Nevertheless, his peculiar strength among the poets of the "Renascence of Wonder" lay principally in richness of colour, in warmth of emotion and in depth of thought expressed

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in the old forms. Rossetti in "The Burden of Nineveh" and a few other poems invented metres, and good ones. Morris invented none. Browning could and did invent metres, such as they were, but no one thinks of Browning in connection with metrical music at all except in one or two notable instances, such as "A Last Ride Together."

Then there leapt upon the world a man who in "Atalanta" and "Poems and Ballads," and the poems that followed, invented more metres than all his contemporaries—nay more than all the other poets in the language put together, from Chaucer down to his own day—a man of whom it may be said that he rarely writes a poem without inventing for it a new metre—a metre that is more melodious than could be invented by any other English poet.

And now as to the two plays given in this volume. With regard to these the difference between them and "Atalanta in Calydon" is so fundamental that it need not be touched upon here. "Chastelard," it will be remembered, is the first and "Mary Stuart" is the third part of a trilogy on the subject of Mary Queen of Scots, and between the two intervenes the second part, "Bothwell." "Chastelard" though published after "Atalanta in Calydon," in 1865, was written before that drama, while "Mary Stuart" did not appear till 1881. There is not

room here to discuss the blank verse of the trilogy in its various parts. But, briefly, it may be said that the finest in dramatic movement is contained in "Bothwell," notably in the scene depicting the death of Darnley.

It is a pity that "Bothwell" cannot possibly be touched upon here. And even concerning "Chastelard" and "Mary Stuart" only a very little can be said. The plays must for the most part be left to speak for themselves. And most eloquently they will speak to all who have the power of appreciating English poetry. A few words, however, seem to be demanded. First as to "Chastelard" and its magnificent conclusion. It is difficult to recall any play that ends more grandly than this. It is true, no doubt, that the situation in which a striking dramatic action is painted through the description of a spectator to one who, though present, is prevented from looking on, is a very old one in imaginative literature, as old as the story of Ægeus in classical legend, as old in modern legend as the famous scene in the story of *Bluebeard* where Sister Anne from the battlements describes to her sister in peril the people approaching to succour them—as old as the scene in the French and Slavic versions of the legend of Tristan where the dying hero awaiting the signal of the white sail upon the ocean announcing that Iseult was on board the ship which had been sent for her, plies his treacherous nurse with questions as to what coloured

sail is to be seen approaching on the horizon, and is killed by being told that the sail is a black one, notifying her absence, whereas it was really a white one notifying her presence.

But these are perhaps all surpassed in the final scene in "Chastelard" where Mary Carmichael describes to Mary Beaton Chastelard's execution. The same effect has been admirably used by Scott in "Ivanhoe" where Rebecca describes from the windows the storming of Front-de-Bœuf's castle to the wounded knight who is unable to see it for himself. And more recently, it has been admirably used by Rossetti in the scene of "Sister Helen" where the answers of the "little brother" to the sister's questions flash upon the reader the terrible pictures of the scared kindred of her doomed lover riding through the night to implore her mercy upon the man her witchcraft is killing. Even that marvellous picture is surpassed by the *dénouement* of "Chastelard." Moreover it has the structural value of pointing to the peripetia of the whole trilogy, and knitting the three plays indissolubly into one artistic whole.

With regard to the feeling of doom which overshadows the entire trilogy, it is rather of "Karma" (which I have defined to be the mysterious power for punishment inherent in man's own evil deeds) than that of the Destiny of the Greeks, (in which the mischievous power of the gods is mixed up with the



workings of "Karma,") that fills the dramatic atmosphere. It was the man whom Mary Beaton passionately loved whose blood was so selfishly shed by the Queen; and the handmaiden's last words to her mistress are,

"But I will never leave you till I die."

And she never does leave her till her bitter vengeance helps to bring about at the end of the trilogy the doom she has predicted.

Throughout the entire trilogy the Queen of Scots remains true to herself in all her virtues which are few and in all her vices which are many. These are thus summed up by the poet:

"Nor shall men ever say  
But she was born right royal; full of sins,  
It may be, and by circumstance or choice  
Dyed and defaced with bloody stains and black,  
Unmerciful, unfaithful, but of heart  
So fiery high, so swift of spirit and clear,  
In extreme danger and pain so lifted up,  
So of all violent things inviolable,  
So large of courage, so superb of soul,  
So sheathed with iron mind invincible  
And arms unbreached of fireproof constancy—  
By shame not shaken, fear or force or death,  
Change, or all confluence of calamities—  
And so at her worst need beloved, and still,  
Naked of help and honour when she seemed,  
As other women would be, and of hope  
Stripped, still so of herself adorable  
By minds not always all ignobly mad  
Nor all made poisonous with false grain of faith,

She shall be a world's wonder to all time,  
A deadly glory watched of marvelling men  
Not without praise, not without noble tears,  
And if without what she would never have  
Who had it never, pity—yet from none  
Quite without reverence and some kind of love  
For that which was so royal."

It will be found by German readers of these dramas that they exemplify in a very striking degree the difference between the conditions of the German and those of the English stage. It is true that in the drama of most countries flexibility has long been vanishing. But it is only in England that it is lost altogether. In the drama of all countries, the demands of illusion—of a commonplace *andry*—increase year by year, but it is, I repeat, in England only that the demarcation between plays written for the study and plays written for the stage has become completely accentuated. In England, indeed, they have become two essentially different forms of art, as I have pointed out in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

That no one at present has written anything like adequately upon the severance between the acted drama and that kind of dramatic poetry which in our time differentiates English drama from that of France and other continental countries, is not a little curious. The growth of realism in art is a necessary and inevitable result of that complexity and that searching knowingness of temper which belong to a social arrangement

like that of modern times. In the drama especially the demand of spectators for further and further material illusion has at last in England made it necessary that every speech shall not only be informed with dramatic life, but shall have a theatric *raison d'être*—almost even a spectacular one—that every response, in short, shall be struck from the dramatic action, and pass as swiftly as a spark from an anvil. But these two plays show that another form of drama in modern times has been invented, the “study play,” or unacted drama. This form seems to be the only kind of poetic art still remaining in which the poet is able to develop in a pure poetic structure his conception of a subtle or a complex character, as he would in the time of Shakespeare have developed it in an acting play. This kind of drama does not pretend to heed theatric conditions, for it is written to be read and not to be acted. Yet it is developed in a certain accordance, howsoever loose, with the structural laws of theatric representation. But what concerns us in studying these two plays is the fact that when the dramatist has determined to produce a drama, not for the boards, but for the study, there arises before him the important question how far a poet may legitimately free himself from those theatric conditions which, being incidents of the modern type of acted drama, are really incidents of a form of art different from that which he is attempting; for it must be borne

in mind that the points which aid illusion in the contemporary theatre tend not to aid but to destroy illusion in the study. Take, for instance, such a drama as the first Lord Lytton's "Lady of Lyons," on the one hand and take "Philip Van Artevelde," or Mr. Swinburne's "Bothwell," or the two plays contained in this volume on the other. In the first case so skilfully is the dialogue elicited by the theatric situations that its falsity to nature is forgotten by the spectator; while in the other three plays dialogue which is so true to nature and to the actual facts of history as to produce when read something of the illusion of a contemporary chronicle is so little supported by theatric conditions that "Philip Van Artevelde," even after much pruning, does not act well, "Bothwell" could never be acted at all, and "Mary Stuart" could only be acted by even more pruning and recasting than were necessary in "Philip Van Artevelde." As to "Bothwell" a single act of twenty-one scenes and a speech of several hundred verses as we get in the play, have been called monstrous, and, indeed, would be monstrous in a tragedy written on the theatric lines. Yet it is, perhaps, a mere question of names after all. Had these plays been called simply "dramatic Chronicles," the reply to objectors to their great length and defective construction would be by a question, "What, then, is the proper construction and what is the proper length of a dramatic chronicle?" Clearly, therefore, there is a very great free-

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dom of construction allowed to the writer of a modern "study play." Yet the laws of imaginative art are here not less inexorable than they are in an acted drama, but more so. The more entirely free is the "study play" from the conditions of theatrical illusion, the less free is it to dispense with poetic illusion, *i.e.* with that dramatic truth which the spectacular realism of the modern theatre can alone cause us to dispense with and forget.

Interesting as is the question raised above, it is impossible, of course, to do more than glance at it here. That it should have been ignored by so many English critics of Mr. Swinburne's dramas is very remarkable.

THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON.

THE PINES, PUTNEY HILL,  
LONDON, SW.

# CHASTELARD.

*Chastelard and Mary Stuart.*

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## PERSONS.

MARY STUART.

MARY BEATON.

MARY SEYTON.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

MARY HAMILTON.

PIERRE DE BOSCOSEL DE CHASTELARD.

DARNLEY.

MURRAY.

RANDOLPH.

MORTON.

LINDSAY.

FATHER BLACK.

*Guards, Burgesses, a Preacher, Citizens, &c.*



Another Yle is there toward the Northe, in the See Ocean, where that ben fulle cruele and ful evele Wommen of Nature: and thei han precious Stones in hire Eyen; and thei ben of that kynde, that zif they beholden ony man, thei slen him anon with the beholdynge, as dothe the Basilisk.

MAUNDEVILE'S *Voiage and Travaille*, Ch. XXVIII.

ACT I.

MARY BEATON.

SCENE I.—*The Upper Chamber in Holyrood.*

*The four MARIES.*

MARY BEATON (*sings*):—

1.

*Le navire  
Est à l'eau;  
Entends rire  
Ce gros flot  
Que fait luire  
Et bruire  
Le vieux sire  
Aquila.*

2.

*Dans l'espace  
Du grand air  
Le vent passe  
Comme un fer;  
Siffle et sonne,  
Tombe et tonne,  
Prend et donne  
A la mer.*

## 3-

*Vois, la brise  
 Tourne au nord,  
 Et la bise  
 Souffle et mord  
 Sur la pure  
 Chevelure  
 Qui murmure  
 Et se loid.*

MARY HAMILTON. You never sing now but it makes  
 you sad;  
 Why do you sing?

MARY BEATON. I hardly know well why;  
 It makes me sad to sing, and very sad  
 To hold my peace.

MARY CARMICHAEL. I know what saddens you.

MARY BEATON. Prithee, what? what?

MARY CARMICHAEL. Why, since we came from  
 France,  
 You have no lover to make stuff for songs.

MARY BEATON. You are wise; for there my pain  
 begins indeed,  
 Because I have no lovers out of France.

MARY SEYTON. I mind me of one Olivier de Pesme,  
 (You knew him, sweet) a pale man with short hair,  
 Wore tied at sleeve the Beaton colour.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Blue—  
 I know, blue scarfs. I never liked that knight.

MARY HAMILTON. Me? I know him? I hardly  
 knew his name.

Oh, was his hair? no, brown.

MARY SEYTON. Light pleases you:  
I have seen the time brown served you well enough.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Lord Darnley's is a mere maid's  
yellow.

MARY HAMILTON. No;  
A man's, good colour.

MARY SEYTON. Ah, does that burn your blood?  
Why, what a bitter colour is this red  
That fills your face! if you be not in love,  
I am no maiden.

MARY HAMILTON. Nay, God help true hearts!  
I must be stabbed with love then, to the bone,  
Yea to the spirit, past cure.

MARY SEYTON. What were you saying?  
I see some jest run up and down your lips.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Finish your song; I know you  
have more of it;  
Good sweet, I pray you do.

MARY BEATON. I am too sad.

MARY CARMICHAEL. This will not sadden you to  
sing; your song  
Tastes sharp of sea and the sea's bitterness,  
But small pain sticks on it.

MARY BEATON. Nay, it is sad;  
For either sorrow with the beaten lips  
Sings not at all, or if it does get breath  
Sings quick and sharp like a hard sort of mirth:  
And so this song does; or I would it did,  
That it might please me better than it does.

MARY SEYTON. Well, as you choose then. What a  
sort of men  
Crowd all about the squares!

MARY CARMICHAEL.           Aye, hateful men;  
For look how many talking mouths be there,  
So many angers show their teeth at us.  
Which one is that, stooped somewhat in the neck,  
That walks so with his chin against the wind,  
Lips sideways shut? a keen-faced man—lo there,  
He that walks midmost.

MARY SEYTON.           That is Master Knox.  
He carries all these folk within his skin,  
Bound up as 'twere between the brows of him  
Like a bad thought; their hearts beat inside his;  
They gather at his lips like flies in the sun,  
Thrust sides to catch his face.

MARY CARMICHAEL.           Look forth; so—push  
The window—further—see you anything?

MARY HAMILTON.   They are well gone; but pull the  
                                  lattice in,  
The wind is like a blade aslant. Would God  
I could get back one day I think upon;  
The day we four and some six after us  
Sat in that Louvre garden and plucked fruits  
To cast love-lots with in the gathered grapes;  
This way; you shut your eyes and reach and pluck,  
And catch a lover for each grape you get.  
I got but one, a green one, and it broke  
Between my fingers and it ran down through them.

MARY SEYTON.   Aye, and the queen fell in a little  
                                  wrath  
Because she got so many, and tore off  
Some of them she had plucked unwittingly—  
She said, against her will. What fell to you?

MARY BEATON. Me? nothing but the stalk of a  
stripped bunch  
With clammy grape-juice leavings at the tip.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Aye, true, the queen came first  
and she won all;

It was her bunch we took to cheat you with.  
What, will you weep for that now? for you seem  
As one that means to weep. God pardon me!  
I think your throat is choking up with tears.  
You are not well, sweet, for a lying jest  
To shake you thus much.

MARY BEATON. I am well enough:  
Give not your pity trouble for my sake.

MARY SEYTON. If you be well sing out your song  
and laugh,  
Though it were but to fret the fellows there.—  
Now shall we catch her secret washed and wet  
In the middle of her song; for she must weep  
If she sing through.

MARY HAMILTON. I told you it was love;  
I watched her eyes all through the masquing time  
Feed on his face by morsels; she must weep.

MARY BEATON.

4.

*Le navire  
Passe et luit,  
Puis chavire  
A grand bruit;  
Et sur l'onde  
La plus blonde  
Tête au monde  
Flotte et fuit.*

## 5.

*Moi, je rame,  
Et l'amour,  
C'est ma flamme,  
Mon grand jour,  
Ma chandelle  
Blanche et belle,  
Ma chapelle  
De séjour.*

## 6.

*Toi, mon âme  
Et ma foi,  
Sois ma dame  
Et ma loi;  
Sois ma mie,  
Sois Marie,  
Sois ma vie,  
Toute à moi!*

MARY SEYTON. I know the song; a song of Chastelard's

He made in coming over with the queen.  
How hard it rained! he played that over twice  
Sitting before her, singing each word soft,  
As if he loved the least she listened to.

MARY HAMILTON. No marvel if he loved it for her sake;

She is the choice of women in the world,  
Is she not, sweet?

MARY BEATON. I have seen no fairer one.

MARY SEYTON. And the most loving: did you note  
last night

How long she held him with her hands and eyes,  
Looking a little sadly, and at last  
Kissed him below the chin and parted so  
As the dance ended?

MARY HAMILTON. This was courtesy;  
So might I kiss my singing-bird's red bill  
After some song, till he bit short my lip.

MARY SEYTON. But if a lady hold her bird anights  
To sing to her between her fingers—ha?  
I have seen such birds.

MARY CARMICHAEL. O, you talk emptily;  
She is full of grace; and marriage in good time  
Will wash the fool called scandal off men's lips.

MARY HAMILTON. I know not that; I know how  
folk would gibe  
If one of us pushed courtesy so far.  
She has always loved love's fashions well; you wot,  
The marshal, head friend of this Chastelard's,  
She used to talk with ere he brought her here  
And sow their talk with little kisses thick  
As roses in rose-harvest. For myself,  
I cannot see which side of her that lurks  
Which snares in such wise all the sense of men;  
What special beauty, subtle as man's eye  
And tender as the inside of the eyelid is,  
There grows about her.

MARY CARMICHAEL. I think her cunning speech—  
The soft and rapid shudder of her breath  
In talking—the rare tender little laugh—  
The pitiful sweet sound like a bird's sigh  
When her voice breaks; her talking does it all.



MARY SEYTON. I say, her eyes with those clear perfect brows:

It is the playing of those eyelashes,  
The lure of amorous looks as sad as love,  
Plucks all souls toward her like a net.

MARY HAMILTON.

What, what!

You praise her in too lover-like a wise  
For women that praise women; such report  
Is like robes worn the rough side next the skin,  
Frets where it warms.

MARY SEYTON. You think too much in French.

*Enter DARNLEY.* Here comes your thorn; what glove  
against it now?

MARY HAMILTON. O, God's good pity! this a thorn  
of mine?

It has not run deep in yet.

MARY CARMICHAEL.

I am not sure:

The red runs over to your face's edge.

DARNLEY. Give me one word; nay, lady, for love's  
sake;

Here, come this way; I will not keep you; no.

—O my sweet soul, why do you wrong me thus?

MARY HAMILTON. Why will you give me for men's  
eyes to burn?

DARNLEY. What, sweet, I love you as mine own  
soul loves me;

They shall divide when we do.

MARY HAMILTON.

I cannot say.

DARNLEY. Why, look you, I am broken with the  
queen;

This is the rancour and the bitter heart

That grows in you; by God it is nought else.

Why, this last night she held me for a fool—  
 Aye, God wot, for a thing of stripe and bell.  
 I bade her make me marshal in her masque—  
 I had the dress here painted, gold and grey  
 (That is, not grey but a blue-green like this)—  
 She tells me she had chosen her marshal, she,  
 The best o' the world for cunning and sweet wit;  
 And what sweet fool but her sweet knight, God help!  
 To serve her with that three-inch wit of his?  
 She is all fool and fiddling now; for me,  
 I am well pleased; God knows, if I might choose  
 I would not be more troubled with her love.  
 Her love is like a briar that rasps the flesh,  
 And yours is soft like flowers. Come this way, love;  
 So, further in this window; hark you here.

*Enter CHASTELARD.*

MARY BEATON. Good morrow, sir.

CHASTELARD. Good morrow, noble lady.

MARY CARMICHAEL. You have heard no news? what news?

CHASTELARD. Nay, I have none.

That maiden-tongued male-faced Elizabeth  
 Hath eyes unlike our queen's, hair not so soft,  
 And hands more sudden save for courtesy;  
 And lips no kiss of love's could bring to flower  
 In such red wise as our queen's; save this news,  
 I know none English.

MARY SEYTON. Come, no news of her;  
 For God's love talk still rather of our queen.

MARY BEATON. God give us grace then to speak  
 well of her.  
 You did right joyfully in our masque last night;

I saw you when the queen lost breath (her head  
Bent back, her chin and lips catching the air—  
A goodly thing to see her) how you smiled  
Across her head, between your lips—no doubt  
You had great joy, sir. Did not you take note  
Once how one lock fell? that was good to see.

CHASTELARD. Yea, good enough to live for.

MARY BEATON. Nay, but sweet  
Enough to die. When she broke off the dance,  
Turning round short and soft—I never saw  
Such supple ways of walking as she has.

CHASTELARD. Why do you praise her gracious looks  
to me?

MARY BEATON. Sir, for mere sport; but tell me even  
for love

How much you love her.

CHASTELARD. I know not: it may be  
If I had set mine eyes to find that out,  
I should not know it. She hath fair eyes: may be  
I love her for sweet eyes or brows or hair,  
For the smooth temples, where God touching her  
Made blue with sweeter veins the flower-sweet white;  
Or for the tender turning of her wrist,  
Or marriage of the eyelid with the cheek;  
I cannot tell; or flush of lifting throat,  
I know not if the colour get a name  
This side of heaven—no man knows; or her mouth,  
A flower's lip with a snake's lip, stinging sweet,  
And sweet to sting with: face that one would see  
And then fall blind and die with sight of it  
Held fast between the eyelids—oh, all these  
And all her body and the soul to that,

The speech and shape and hand and foot and heart  
That I would die of—yea, her name that turns  
My face to fire being written—I know no whit  
How much I love them.

MARY BEATON. Nor how she loves you back?

CHASTELARD. I know her ways of loving, all of them:  
A sweet soft way the first is; afterward  
It burns and bites like fire; the end of that,  
Charred dust, and eyelids bitten through with smoke.

MARY BEATON. What has she done for you to gird  
at her?

CHASTELARD. Nothing. You do not greatly love her,  
you,  
Who do not—gird, you call it. I am bound to France;  
Shall I take word from you to anyone?  
So it be harmless, not a gird, I will.

MARY BEATON. I doubt you will not go hence with  
your life.

CHASTELARD. Why, who should slay me? no man  
northwards born,  
In my poor mind; my sword's lip is no maid's  
To fear the iron biting of their own,  
Though they kiss hard for hate's sake.

MARY BEATON. Lo you, sir,  
How sharp he whispers, what close breath and eyes—  
And hers are fast upon him, do you see?

CHASTELARD. Well, which of these must take my  
life in hand?  
Pray God it be the better: nay, which hand?

MARY BEATON. I think, none such. The man is  
goodly made;  
She is tender-hearted toward his courtesies,

And would not have them fall too low to find.  
Look, they slip forth.

*[Exeunt DARNLEY and MARY HAMILTON.]*

MARY SEYTON. For love's sake, after them,  
And soft as love can.

*[Exeunt MARY CARMICHAEL and MARY SEYTON.]*

CHASTELARD. True, a goodly man.  
What shapeliness and state he hath, what eyes,  
Brave brow and lordly lip! were it not fit  
Great queens should love him?

MARY BEATON. See you now, fair lord,  
I have but scant breath's time to help myself,  
And I must cast my heart out on a chance;  
So bear with me. That we twain have loved well,  
I have no heart nor wit to say; God wot  
We had never made good lovers, you and I.  
Look you, I would not have you love me, sir,  
For all the love's sake in the world. I say,  
You love the queen, and loving burns you up,  
And mars the grace and joyous wit you had.  
Turning your speech to sad, your face to strange,  
Your mirth to nothing: and I am piteous, I,  
Even as the queen is, and such women are;  
And if I helped you to your love-longing,  
Meseems some grain of love might fall my way  
And love's god help me when I came to love;  
I have read tales of men that won their loves  
On some such wise.

CHASTELARD. If you mean mercifully,  
I am bound to you past thought and thank; if worse,  
I will but thank your lips and not your heart.

MARY BEATON. Nay, let love wait and praise me, in  
God's name,  
Some day when he shall find me; yet, God wot,  
My lips are of one colour with my heart,  
Withdraw now from me, and about midnight  
In some close chamber without light or noise  
It may be I shall get you speech of her;  
She loves you well; it may be she will speak,  
I wot not what; she loves you at her heart.  
Let her not see that I have given you word,  
Lest she take shame and hate her love. Till night.  
Let her not see it.

CHASTELARD. I will not thank you now,  
And then I'll die what sort of death you will.  
Farewell. [Exit.

MARY BEATON. And by God's mercy and my love's  
I will find ways to earn such thank of you. [Exit.

SCENE II.—*A Hall in the same.*

*The QUEEN, DARNLEY, MURRAY, RANDOLPH, the  
MARIES, CHASTELARD, etc.*

QUEEN. Hath no man seen my lord of Chastelard?  
Nay, no great matter. Keep you on that side:  
Begin the purpose.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Madam, he is here.

QUEEN. Begin a measure now that other side.  
I will not dance; let them play soft a little.  
Fair sir, we had a dance to tread to-night,  
To teach our north folk all sweet ways of France;

*Chastelard and Mary Stuart.*

But at this time we have no heart to it.  
Sit, sir, and talk. Look, this breast-clasp is new,  
The French king sent it me.

CHASTELARD.                   A goodly thing:  
But what device? the word is ill to catch.

QUEEN. A Venus crowned, that eats the hearts of  
men:  
Below her flies a love with a bat's wings,  
And strings the hair of paramours to bind  
Live birds' feet with. Lo what small subtle work:  
The smith's name, Gian Grisostomo da—what?  
Can you read that? The sea froths underfoot;  
She stands upon the sea and it curls up  
In soft loose curls that run to one in the wind.  
But her hair is not shaken, there's a fault;  
It lies straight down in close-cut points and tongues,  
Not like blown hair. The legend is writ small:  
Still one makes out this—*Cave*—if you look.

CHASTELARD. I see the Venus well enough, God wot,  
But nothing of the legend.

QUEEN.                   Come, fair lord,  
Shall we dance now? my heart is good again.  
[*They dance a measure.*]

DARNLEY. I do not like this manner of a dance,  
This game of two by two; it were much better  
To meet between the changes and to mix  
Than still to keep apart and whispering  
Each lady out of earshot with her friend.

MARY BEATON. That's as the lady serves her knight,  
I think:  
We are broken up too much.

DARNLEY. Nay, no such thing;  
 Be not wroth, lady, I wot it was the queen  
 Pricked each his friend out. Look you now—your ear—  
 If love had gone by choosing—how they laugh,  
 Lean lips together, and wring hands underhand!  
 What, you look white too, sick of heart, ashamed,  
 No marvel—for men call it—hark you though—

[*They pass.*]

MURRAY. Was the Queen found no merrier in  
 France?

MARY HAMILTON. Why, have you seen her sorrow-  
 ful to-night?

MURRAY. I say not so much; blithe she seems at  
 whiles,  
 Gentle and goodly doubtless in all ways,  
 But hardly with such lightness and quick heart  
 As it was said.

MARY HAMILTON. 'Tis your great care of her  
 Makes you misdoubt; nought else.

MURRAY. Yea, may be so;  
 She has no cause I know to sadden her. [*They pass.*]

QUEEN. I am tired too soon; I could have danced  
 down hours

Two years gone hence and felt no wearier.  
 One grows much older northwards, my fair lord;  
 I wonder men die south; meseems all France  
 Smells sweet with living, and bright breath of days  
 That keep men far from dying. Peace; pray you  
 now,

No dancing more. Sing, sweet, and make us mirth;  
 We have done with dancing measures: sing that song  
 You call the song of love at ebb.



MARY BEATON (*sings*).

1.

*Between the sunset and the sea  
My love laid hands and lips on me;  
Of sweet came sour, of day came night,  
Of long desire came brief delight:  
Ah love, and what thing came of thee  
Between the sea-downs and the sea?*

2.

*Between the sea-mark and the sea  
Joy grew to grief, grief grew to me;  
Love turned to tears, and tears to fire,  
And dead delight to new desire;  
Love's talk, love's touch there seemed to be  
Between the sea-sand and the sea.*

3.

*Between the sundown and the sea  
Love watched one hour of love with me;  
Then down the all-golden water-ways  
His feet flew after yesterdays;  
I saw them come and saw them flee  
Between the sea-foam and the sea.*

4.

*Between the sea-strand and the sea  
Love fell on sleep, sleep fell on me;  
The first star saw twain turn to one  
Between the moonrise and the sun;  
The next, that saw not love, saw me  
Between the sea-banks and the sea.*

QUEEN.

What mirth is here!      Lo, sirs,  
Some song of yours, fair lord;

You know glad ways of rhyming—no such tunes  
As go to tears.

CHASTELARD. I made this yesterday;  
For its love's sake I pray you let it live. [*He sings.*]

## 1.

*Après tant de jours, après tant de pleurs,  
Soyez secourable à mon âme en peine.  
Voyez comme Avril fait l'amour aux fleurs;  
Dame d'amour, dame aux belles couleurs,  
Dieu vous a fait belle, Amour vous fait reine.*

## 2.

*Rions, je t'en prie; aimons, je le veux.  
Le temps fuit et rit et ne revient guère  
Pour baiser le bout de tes blonds cheveux,  
Pour baiser tes cils, ta bouche et tes yeux;  
L'amour n'a qu'un jour auprès de sa mère.*

QUEEN. 'Tis a true song; love shall not pluck time  
back

Nor time lie down with love. For me, I am old;  
Have you no hair changed since you changed to Scot?  
I look each day to see my face drawn up  
About the eyes, as if they sucked the cheeks.  
I think this air and face of things here north  
Puts snow at flower-time in the blood, and tears  
Between the sad eyes and the merry mouth  
In their youth-days.

CHASTELARD. It is a bitter air.

QUEEN. Faith, if I might be gone, sir, would I  
stay?

I think, for no man's love's sake.

CHASTELARD.

I think not.



MURRAY.           Yea, a good sword too,  
And of good kin; too light of loving though;  
These jangling song-smiths are keen love-mongers,  
They snap at all meats.

DARNLEY.                      What! by God I think,  
For all his soft French face and bright boy's sword,  
There be folks fairer: and for knightliness,  
These hot-lipped brawls of Paris breed sweet knights—  
Mere stabbers for a laugh across the wine.—

QUEEN. There, I have danced you down for once  
fair lord;  
You look pale now. Nay then for courtesy  
I must needs help you; do not bow your head,  
I am tall enough to reach close under it.

[*Kisses him*  
Now come, we'll sit and see this passage through.—

DARNLEY. A courtesy, God help us! courtesy—  
Pray God it wound not where it should heal wounds.  
Why, there was here last year some lord of France  
(Priest on the wrong side as some folk are prince)  
Told tales of Paris ladies—nay, by God,  
No jest for queen's lips to catch laughter of  
That would keep clean; I wot he made good mirth,  
But she laughed over sweetly, and in such wise—  
Nay, I laughed too, but lothly.—

QUEEN. How they look!  
The least thing courteous galls them to the bone.  
What would one say now I were thinking of?

CHASTELARD. It seems, some sweet thing.

QUEEN. True, a sweet one, sir—  
That madrigal you made Alys de Saulx  
Of the three ways of love; the first kiss honour,

The second pity, and the last kiss love.  
Which think you now was that I kissed you with?

CHASTELARD. It should be pity, if you be pitiful;  
For I am past all honouring that keep  
Outside the eye of battle, where my kin  
Fallen overseas have found this many a day  
No helm of mine between them; and for love,  
I think of that as dead men of good days  
Ere the wrong side of death was theirs, when God  
Was friends with them.

QUEEN. Good; call it pity then.  
You have a subtle riddling skill at love  
Which is not like a lover. For my part,  
I am resolved to be well done with love,  
Though I were fairer-faced than all the world;  
As there be fairer. Think you, fair my knight,  
Love shall live after life in any man?  
I have given you stuff for riddles.

CHASTELARD. Most sweet queen,  
They say men dying remember, with sharp joy  
And rapid reluctance of desire,  
Some old thing, some swift breath of wind, some word,  
Some sword-stroke or dead lute-strain, some lost sight,  
Some sea-blossom stripped to the sun and burned  
At naked ebb—some river-flower that breathes  
Against the stream like a swooned swimmer's mouth—  
Some tear or laugh ere lip and eye were man's—  
Sweet stings that struck the blood in riding—nay,  
Some garment or sky-colour or spice-smell,  
And die with heart and face shut fast on it,  
And know not why, and weep not; it may be  
Men shall hold love fast always in such wise

In new fair lives where all are new things else,  
And know not why, and weep not.

QUEEN. A right rhyme,  
And right a rhyme's worth: nay, a sweet song, though.  
What, shall my cousin hold fast that love of his,  
Her face and talk, when life ends? as God grant  
His life end late and sweet; I love him well.  
She is fair enough, his lover; a fair-faced maid,  
With grey sweet eyes and tender touch of talk;  
And that, God wot, I wist not. See you, sir,  
Men say I needs must get wed hastily;  
Do none point lips at him?

CHASTELARD.

Yea, guessingly.

QUEEN. God help such lips! and get me leave to laugh!  
What should I do but paint and put him up  
Like a gilt god, a saintship in a shrine,  
For all fools' feast? God's mercy on men's wits!  
Tall as a housetop and as bare of brain—  
I'll have no staffs with fool-faced carven heads  
To hang my life on. Nay, for love, no more,  
For fear I laugh and set their eyes on edge  
To find out why I laugh. Good night, fair lords;  
Bid them cease playing. Give me your hand; good night.

SCENE III.—MARY BEATON'S *Chamber: night.*

*Enter* CHASTELARD.

CHASTELARD. I am not certain yet she will not come;  
For I can feel her hand's heat still in mine,  
Past doubting of, and see her brows half drawn,

And half a light in the eyes. If she come not,  
I am no worse than he that dies to-night.  
This two years' patience gets an end at least,  
Whichever way I am well done with it.  
How hard the thin sweet moon is, split and laced  
And latticed over, just a stray of it  
Catching and clinging at a strip of wall,  
Hardly a hand's breadth. Did she turn indeed  
In going out? not to catch up her gown  
The page let slip, but to keep sight of me?  
There was a soft small stir beneath her eyes  
Hard to put on, a quivering of her blood  
That knew of the old nights watched out wakefully.  
Those measures of her dancing too were changed—  
More swift and with more eager stops at whiles  
And rapid pauses where breath failed her lips.

*Enter MARY BEATON.*

O, she is come: if you be she indeed  
Let me but hold your hand; what, no word yet?  
You turn and kiss me without word; O sweet,  
If you will slay me be not over quick,  
Kill me with some slow heavy kiss that plucks  
The heart out at the lips. Alas! sweet love,  
Give me some old sweet word to kiss away.  
Is it a jest? for I can feel your hair  
Touch me,—I may embrace your body too?  
I know you well enough without sweet words.  
How should one make you speak? This is not she.  
Come in the light; nay, let me see your eyes.  
Ah, you it is? what have I done to you?  
And do you look now to be slain for this  
That you twist back and shudder like one stabbed?

MARY BEATON. Yea, kill me now and do not look  
at me:

God knows I meant to die. Sir, for God's love  
Kill me now quick ere I go mad with shame.

CHASTELARD. Cling not upon my wrists: let go the hilt:  
Nay, you will bruise your hand with it: stand up:  
You shall not have my sword forth.

MARY BEATON. Kill me now,  
I will not rise: there, I am patient, see,  
I will not strive, but kill me for God's sake.

CHASTELARD. Pray you rise up and be not shaken so:  
Forgive me my rash words, my heart was gone  
After the thing you were: be not ashamed;  
Give me the shame, you have no part in it;  
Can I not say a word shall do you good?  
Forgive that too.

MARY BEATON. I shall run crazed with shame;  
But when I felt your lips catch hold on mine  
It stopped my breath: I would have told you all;  
Let me go out; you see I lied to you,  
And I am shamed; I pray you loose me, sir,  
Let me go out.

CHASTELARD. Think no base things of me:  
I were most base to let you go ashamed.  
Think my heart's love and honour go with you:  
Yea, while I live, for your love's noble sake,  
I am your servant in what wise may be,  
To love and serve you with right thankful heart.

MARY BEATON. I have given men leave to mock  
me, and must bear  
What shame they please: you have good cause to mock.  
Let me pass now.



CHASTELARD. You know I mock you not.  
If ever I leave off to honour you,  
God give me shame! I were the worst churl born.

MARY BEATON. No marvel though the queen should  
love you too,  
Being such a knight. I pray you for her love,  
Lord Chastelard, of your great courtesy,  
Think now no scorn to give me my last kiss  
That I shall have of man before I die.  
Even the same lips you kissed and knew not of  
Will you kiss now, knowing the shame of them,  
And say no one word to me afterwards,  
That I may see I have loved the best lover  
And man most courteous of all men alive?

MARY SEYTON (*within*). Here, fetch the light: nay,  
this way; enter all.

MARY BEATON. I am twice undone. Fly, get some  
hiding, sir;  
They have spied upon me somehow.

CHASTELARD. Nay, fear not;  
Stand by my side.

*Enter MARY SEYTON and MARY HAMILTON.*

MARY HAMILTON. Give me that light: this way.

CHASTELARD. What jest is here, fair ladies? it  
walks late,  
Something too late for laughing.

MARY SEYTON. Nay, fair sir,  
What jest is this of yours? Look to your lady:  
She is nigh swooned. The queen shall know all  
this.

MARY HAMILTON. A grievous shame it is we are  
fallen upon;

Hold forth the light. Is this your care of us?  
Nay, come, look up: this is no game, God wot.

CHASTELARD. Shame shall befall them that speak  
shamefully:

I swear this lady is as pure and good  
As any maiden, and who believes me not  
Shall keep the shame for his part and the lie.  
To them that come in honour and not in hate  
I will make answer. Lady, have good heart.  
Give me the light there: I will see you forth.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.  
DARNLEY.

SCENE I.—*The great Chamber in Holyrood.*

*The QUEEN and MARY SEYTON.*

QUEEN. But will you swear it?

MARY SEYTON. Swear it, madam?

QUEEN. Aye—

Swear it.

MARY SEYTON. Madam, I am not friends with them.

QUEEN. Swear then against them if you are not friends.

MARY SEYTON. Indeed I saw them kiss.

QUEEN. So lovers use—

What, their mouths close? a goodly way of love!

Or but the hands? or on her throat? Prithee—

You have sworn that.

MARY SEYTON. I say what I saw done.

QUEEN. Aye, you did see her cheeks (God smite them red!)

Kissed either side? what, they must eat strange food,  
Those singing lips of his?

MARY SEYTON. Sweet meat enough—

They started at my coming five yards off,  
But there they were.

QUEEN. A maid may have kissed cheeks  
And no shame in them—yet one would not swear.  
You have sworn that. Pray God he be not mad:  
A sickness in his eyes. The left side love  
(I was told that) and the right courtesy.  
'Tis good fools' fashion. What, no more but this?  
For me, God knows I am no whit wroth; not I;  
But, for your fame's sake that her shame will sting,  
I cannot see a way to pardon her—  
For your fame's sake, less that be prated of.

MARY SEYTON. Nay, if she were not chaste—I have  
not said  
She was not chaste.

QUEEN. I know you are tender of her;  
And your sweet word will hardly turn her sweet.

MARY SEYTON. Indeed I would fain do her any good.  
Shall I not take some gracious word to her?

QUEEN. Bid her not come or wait on me to-day.

MARY SEYTON. Will you see him?

QUEEN. See—O, this Chastelard?  
He doth not well to sing maids into shame;  
And folk are sharp here; yet for sweet friends' sake  
Assuredly I'll see him. I am not wroth.  
A goodly man, and a good sword thereto—  
It may be he shall wed her. I am not wroth.

MARY SEYTON. Nay, though she bore with him, she  
hath no great love,  
I doubt me, that way.

QUEEN. God mend all, I pray—  
And keep us from all wrong-doing and wild words.  
I think there is no fault men fall upon  
But I could pardon. Look you, I would swear

She were no paramour for any man,  
So well I love her.

MARY SEYTON. Am I to bid him in?

QUEEN. As you will, sweet. But if you held me  
hard

You did me grievous wrong. Doth he wait there?  
Men call me over tender; I had rather so,  
Than too ungracious. Father, what with you?

*Enter FATHER BLACK.*

FATHER BLACK. God's peace and health of soul be  
with the queen!

And pardon be with me though I speak truth.  
As I was going on peaceable men's wise  
Through your good town, desiring no man harm,  
A kind of shameful woman with thief's lips  
Spake somewhat to me over a thrust-out chin,  
Soliciting as I deemed an alms; which alms  
(Remembering what was writ of Magdalen)  
I gave not grudging but with pure good heart,  
When lo some scurril children that lurked near,  
Set there by Satan for my stumbling-stone,  
Fell hooting with necks thwart and eyes asquint,  
Screeched and made horns and shot out tongues at me,  
As at my Lord the Jews shot out their tongues  
And made their heads wag; I considering this  
Took up my cross in patience and passed forth:  
Nevertheless one ran between my feet  
And made me totter, using speech and signs  
I smart with shame to think of: then my blood  
Kindled, and I was moved to smite the knave,  
And the knave howled; whereat the lewd whole herd  
Brake forth upon me and cast mire and stones

So that I ran sore risk of bruise or gash  
 If they had touched; likewise I heard men say,  
 (Their foul speech missed not of mine ear) they cried,  
 "This devil's mass-priest hankers for new flesh  
 Like a dry hound; let him seek such at home,  
 Snuff and smoke out the queen's French—"

QUEEN.

They said that?

FATHER BLACK. "French paramours that breed more  
 shames than sons

All her court through;" forgive me.

QUEEN.

With my heart.

Father, you see the hatefulness of these—  
 They loathe us for our love. I am not moved:  
 What should I do being angry? By this hand  
 (Which is not big enough to bruise their lips),  
 I marvel what thing should be done with me  
 To make me wroth. We must have patience with us  
 When we seek thank of men.

FATHER BLACK.

Madam, farewell;

I pray God keep you in such patient heart. [*Exit.*

QUEEN. Let him come now.

MARY SEYTON.

Madam, he is at hand. [*Exit.*

*Enter CHASTELARD.*

QUEEN. Give me that broidery frame; how, gone so  
 soon?

No maid about? Reach me some skein of silk.  
 What, are you come, fair lord? Now by my life  
 That lives here idle, I am right glad of you;  
 I have slept so well and sweet since yesternight  
 It seems our dancing put me in glad heart.  
 Did you sleep well?

*Chastelard and Mary Stuart.*

Q

CHASTELARD.        Yea, as a man may sleep.

QUEEN.    You smile as if I jested; do not men  
Sleep as we do? Had you fair dreams in the night?  
For me—but I should fret you with my dreams—  
I dreamed sweet things. You are good at sooth-saying:  
Make me a sonnet of my dream.

CHASTELARD.                                I will,  
When I shall know it.

QUEEN.                                I thought I was asleep  
In Paris, lying by my lord, and knew  
In somehow he was well awake, and yet  
I could not wake too; and I seemed to know  
He hated me, and the least breath I made  
Would turn somehow to slay or stifle me.  
Then in brief time he rose and went away,  
Saying, *Let her dream, but when her dream is out  
I will come back and kill her as she wakes.*  
And I lay sick and trembling with sore fear,  
And still I knew that I was deep asleep;  
And thinking *I must dream now, or I die,  
God send me some good dream lest I be slain,*  
I fell fancying one had bound my feet with cords  
And bade me dance, and the first measure made  
I fell upon my face and wept for pain:  
And my cords broke, and I began the dance  
To a bitter tune; and he that danced with me  
Was clothed in black with long red lines and bars  
And masked down to the lips, but by the chin  
I knew you though your lips were sewn up close  
With scarlet thread all dabbled wet in blood.  
And then I knew the dream was not for good.  
    And striving with sore travail to reach up

And kiss you (you were taller in my dream)  
I missed your lips and woke.

CHASTELARD. Sweet dreams, you said?  
An evil dream I hold it for, sweet love.

QUEEN. You call love sweet; yea, what is bitter,  
then?

There's nothing broken sleep could hit upon  
So bitter as the breaking down of love.  
You call me sweet; I am not sweet to you,  
Nor you—O, I would say not sweet to me,  
And if I said so I should hardly lie.  
But there have been those things between us, sir,  
That men call sweet.

CHASTELARD. I know not how *There is*  
Turns to *There hath been*; 'tis a heavier change  
Than change of flesh to dust. Yet though years change  
And good things end and evil things grow great,  
The old love that was, or that was dreamed about,  
That sang and kissed and wept upon itself,  
Laughed and ran mad with love of its own face,  
That was a sweet thing.

QUEEN. Nay, I know not well.  
'Tis when the man is held fast underground  
They say for sooth what manner of heart he had.  
We are alive, and cannot be well sure  
If we loved much or little: think you not  
It were convenient one of us should die?

CHASTELARD. Madam, your speech is harsh to understand.

QUEEN. Why, there could come no change then;  
one of us  
Would never need to fear our love might turn



To the sad thing that it may grow to be.  
I would sometimes all things were dead asleep  
That I have loved, all buried in soft beds  
And sealed with dreams and visions, and each dawn  
Sung to by sorrows, and all night assuaged  
By short sweet kisses and by sweet long loves  
For old life's sake, lest weeping overmuch  
Should wake them in a strange new time, and arm  
Memory's blind hand to kill forgetfulness.

CHASTELARD. Look, you dream still, and sadly.

QUEEN. Sooth, a dream;

For such things died or lied in sweet love's face,  
And I forget them not, God help my wit!  
I would the whole world were made up of sleep  
And life not fashioned out of lies and loves.  
We foolish women have such times, you know,  
When we are weary or afraid or sick  
For perfect nothing.

CHASTELARD (*aside*). Now would one be fain  
To know what bitter or what dangerous thing  
She thinks of, softly chafing her soft lip.  
She must mean evil.

QUEEN. Are you sad too, sir;

That you say nothing?

CHASTELARD. I? not sad a jot—  
Though this your talk might make a blithe man sad.

QUEEN. O me! I must not let stray sorrows out;  
They are ill to fledge, and if they feel blithe air  
They wail and chirp untunefully. Would God  
I had been a man! when I was born, men say,  
My father turned his face and wept to think  
I was no man.

CHASTELARD. Will you weep too?

QUEEN. In sooth,

If I were man I should be no base man;  
I could have fought; yea, I could fight now too  
If men would shew me; I would I were the king!  
I should be all ways better than I am.

CHASTELARD. Nay, would you have more honour,  
having this—

Men's hearts and loves and the sweet spoil of souls  
Given you like simple gold to bind your hair?  
Say you were king of thews, not queen of souls.  
An iron headpiece hammered to a head,  
You might fail too.

QUEEN. No, then I would not fail,  
Or God should make me woman back again.  
To be King James—you hear men say *King James*,  
The word sounds like a piece of gold thrown down,  
Rings with a round and royal note in it—  
A name to write good record of; this king  
Fought here and there, was beaten such a day,  
And came at last to a good end, his life  
Being all lived out, and for the main part well  
And like a king's life; then to have men say  
(As now they say of Flodden, here they broke  
And there they held up to the end) years back  
They saw you—*yea, I saw the king's face helmed  
Red in the hot lit foreground of some fight  
Hold the whole war as it were by the bit, a horse  
Fit for his knees' grip—the great rearing war  
That frothed with lips stung up, and shook men's lives  
Off either flank of it like snow; I saw  
(You could not hear as his sword rang), saw him*

*Shout, laugh, smite straight, and flaw the riven ranks,  
Move as the wind moves, and his horse's feet  
Stripe their long flags with dust.* Why, if one died,  
To die so in the heart and heat of war  
Were a much goodlier thing than living soft  
And speaking sweet for fear of men. Woe's me,  
Is there no way to pluck this body off?  
Then I should never fear a man again,  
Even in my dreams I should not; no, by heaven.

CHASTELARD. I never thought you did fear anything.

QUEEN. God knows I do; I could be sick with wrath  
To think what grievous fear I have 'twixt whiles  
Of mine own self and of base men: last night  
If certain lords were glancing where I was  
Under the eyelid, with sharp lip and brow,  
I tell you, for pure shame and fear of them,  
I could have gone and slain them.

CHASTELARD. Verily,  
You are changed since those good days that fell in  
France;  
But yet I think you are not so changed at heart  
As to fear man.

QUEEN. I would I had no need.  
Lend me your sword a little; a fair sword;  
I see the fingers that I hold it with  
Clear in the blade, bright pink, the shell-colour,  
Brighter than flesh is really, curved all round.  
Now men would mock if I should wear it here,  
Bound under bosom with a girdle, here,  
And yet I have heart enough to wear it well.  
Speak to me like a woman, let me see  
If I can play at man.

CHASTELARD. God save King James!

QUEEN. Would you could change now! Fie, this  
will not do;

Unclasp your sword; nay, the hilt hurts my side;  
It sticks fast here. Unbind this knot for me:  
Stoop, and you'll see it closer; thank you: there.  
Now I can breathe, sir. Ah! it hurts me, though:  
This was fool's play.

CHASTELARD. Yea, you are better so,  
Without the sword; your eyes are stronger things,  
Whether to save or slay.

QUEEN. Alas, my side!  
It hurts right sorely. Is it not pitiful  
Our souls should be so bound about with flesh  
Even when they leap and smite with wings and feet,  
The least pain plucks them back, puts out their eyes,  
Turns them to tears and words? Ah my sweet knight,  
You have the better of us that weave and weep  
While the blithe battle blows upon your eyes  
Like rain and wind; yet I remember too  
When this last year the fight at Corrichie  
Reddened the rushes with stained fen-water,  
I rode with my good men and took delight,  
Feeling the sweet clear wind upon my eyes  
And rainy soft smells blown upon my face  
In riding: then the great fight jarred and joined,  
And the sound stung me right through heart and all;  
For I was here, see, gazing off the hills,  
In the wet air; our housings were all wet,  
And not a plume stood stiffly past the ear  
But flapped between the bridle and the neck;  
And under us we saw the battle go

Like running water; I could see by fits  
Some helm the rain fell shining off, some flag  
Snap from the staff, shorn through or broken short  
In the man's falling: yea, one seemed to catch  
The very grasp of tumbled men at men,  
Teeth clenched in throats, hands riveted in hair,  
Tearing the life out with no help of swords.  
And all the clamour seemed to shine, the light  
Seemed to shout as a man doth; twice I laughed—  
I tell you, twice my heart swelled out with thirst  
To be into the battle; see, fair lord,  
I swear it seemed I might have made a knight,  
And yet the simple bracing of a belt  
Makes me cry out; this is too pitiful,  
This dusty half of us made up with fears.—  
Have you been ever quite so glad to fight  
As I have thought men must? pray you, speak  
truth.

CHASTELARD. Yea, when the time came, there caught  
hold of me  
Such pleasure in the head and hands and blood  
As may be kindled under loving lips:  
Crossing the ferry once to the Clerks' Field,  
I mind me how the plashing noise of Seine  
Put fire into my face for joy, and how  
My blood kept measure with the swinging boat  
Till we touched land, all for the sake of that  
Which should be soon.

QUEEN. Her name, for God's love, sir;  
You slew your friend for love's sake? nay, the  
name.

CHASTELARD. Faith, I forget.

QUEEN. Now by the faith I have  
You have no faith to swear by.

CHASTELARD. A good sword:  
We left him quiet after a thrust or twain.

QUEEN. I would I had been at hand and marked  
them off

As the maids did when we played singing games:  
You outwent me at rhyming; but for faith,  
We fight best there. I would I had seen you fight.

CHASTELARD. I would you had; his play was worth  
an eye;

He made some gallant way before that pass  
Which made me way through him.

QUEEN. Would I saw that—  
How did you slay him?

CHASTELARD. A clean pass—this way;  
Right in the side here, where the blood has root.  
His wrist went round in pushing, see you, thus,  
Or he had pierced me.

QUEEN. Yea, I see, sweet knight.  
I have a mind to love you for his sake;  
Would I had seen.

CHASTELARD. Hugues de Marsillac—  
I have the name now; 'twas a goodly one  
Before he changed it for a dusty name.

QUEEN. Talk not of death; I would hear living  
talk

Of good live swords and good strokes struck withal,  
Brave battles and the mirth of mingling men,  
Not of cold names you greet a dead man with.  
You are yet young for fighting; but in fight  
Have you never caught a wound?

CHASTELARD.

Yea, twice or so:

The first time in a little outlying field  
(My first field) at the sleepy grey of dawn,  
They found us drowsy, fumbling at our girths,  
And rode us down by heaps; I took a hurt  
Here in the shoulder.

QUEEN. Ah, I mind well now;  
Did you not ride a day's space afterward,  
Having two wounds? yea, Dandelot it was,  
That Dandelot took word of it. I know,  
Sitting at meat when the news came to us  
I had nigh swooned but for those Florence eyes  
Slanting my way with sleek lids drawn up close—  
Yea, and she said, the Italian brokeress,  
She said such men were good for great queens' love.  
I would you might die, when you come to die,  
Like a knight slain. Pray God we make good ends.  
For love too, love dies hard or easily,  
But some way dies on some day, ere we die.

CHASTELARD. You made a song once of old flowers  
and loves,  
Will you not sing that rather? 'tis long gone  
Since you sang last.

QUEEN. I had rather sigh than sing  
And sleep than sigh; 'tis long since verily,  
But I will once more sing; aye, thus it was. [*Sings.*]

**I.**

*J'ai vu faner bien des choses,  
Mainte feuille aller au vent.  
En songeant aux vieilles roses,  
J'ai pleuré souvent.*

## 2.

*Vois-tu dans les roses mortes  
Amour qui sourit caché?  
O mon amant, à nos portes  
L'as-tu vu couché?*

## 3.

*As-tu vu jamais au monde  
Vénus chasser et courir?  
Fille de l'onde, avec l'onde  
Doit-elle mourir?*

## 4.

*Aux jours de neige et de givre  
L'amour s'effeuille et s'endort;  
Avec mai doit-il revivre,  
Ou bien est-il mort?*

## 5.

*Qui sait où s'en vont les roses?  
Qui sait où s'en va le vent?  
En songeant à telles choses,  
J'ai pleuré souvent.*

I never heard yet but love made good knights,  
But for pure faith, by Mary's holiness,  
I think she lies about men's lips asleep,  
And if one kiss or pluck her by the hand  
To wake her, why God help your woman's wit,  
Faith is but dead; dig her grave deep at heart,  
And hide her face with cerecloths; farewell faith.  
Would I could tell why I talk idly. Look,  
Here come my riddle-readers. Welcome all;



*Enter MURRAY, DARNLEY, RANDOLPH, LINDSAY, MORTON,  
and other LORDS.*

Sirs, be right welcome. Stand you by my side,  
Fair cousin, I must lean on love or fall;  
You are a goodly staff, sir; tall enough,  
And fair enough to serve. My gentle lords,  
I am full glad of God that in great grace  
He hath given me such a lordly stay as this;  
There is no better friended queen alive.  
For the repealing of those banished men  
That stand in peril yet of last year's fault,  
It is our will; you have our seal to that.  
Brother, we hear harsh bruits of bad report  
Blown up and down about our almoner;  
See you to this: let him be sought into:  
They say lewd folk make ballads of their spleen,  
Strew miry ways of words with talk of him;  
If they have cause let him be spoken with.

LINDSAY. Madam, they charge him with so rank a  
life

Were it not well this fellow were plucked out—  
Seeing this is not an eye that doth offend,  
But a blurred glass it were no harm to break;  
Yea rather it were gracious to be done?

QUEEN. Let him be weighed, and use him as he is;  
I am of my nature pitiful, ye know,  
And cannot turn my love unto a thorn  
In so brief space. Ye are all most virtuous;  
Yea, there is goodness grafted on this land;  
But yet compassion is some part of God.  
There is much heavier business held on hand  
Than one man's goodness: yea, as things fare here,

A matter worth more weighing. All you wot  
I am to choose a help to my weak feet,  
A lamp before my face, a lord and friend  
To walk with me in weary ways, high up  
Between the wind and rain and the hot sun.  
Now I have chosen a helper to myself,  
I wot the best a woman ever won;  
A man that loves me, and a royal man,  
A goodly love and lord for any queen.  
But for the peril and despite of men  
I have sometime tarried and withheld myself,  
Not fearful of his worthiness nor you,  
But with some lady's loathing to let out  
My whole heart's love; for truly this is hard,  
Not like a woman's fashion, shamefacedness  
And noble grave reluctance of herself  
To be the tongue and cry of her own heart.  
Nathless plain speech is better than much wit,  
So ye shall bear with me; albeit I think  
Ye have caught the mark whereat my heart is bent.  
I have kept close counsel and shut up men's lips,  
But lightly shall a woman's will slip out,  
The foolish little winged will of her,  
Through cheek or eye when tongue is charmed asleep.  
For that good lord I have good will to wed,  
I wot he knew long since which way it flew,  
Even till it lit on his right wrist and sang.  
Lo, here I take him by the hand: fair lords,  
This is my kinsman, made of mine own blood,  
I take to halve the state and services  
That bow down to me, and to be my head,  
My chief, my master, my sweet lord and king.

Now shall I never say "sweet cousin" more  
To my dear head and husband; here, fair sir,  
I give you all the heart of love in me  
To gather off my lips. Did it like you,  
The taste of it? sir, it was whole and true.  
God save our king!

DARNLEY. Nay, nay, sweet love, no lord;  
No king of yours though I were lord of these.

QUEEN. Let word be sent to all good friends of  
ours

To help us to be glad; England and France  
Shall bear great part of our rejoicings up.  
Give me your hand, dear lord; for from this time  
I must not walk alone. Lords, have good cheer:  
For you shall have a better face than mine  
To set upon your kingly gold and shew  
For Scotland's forehead in the van of things.  
Go with us now, and see this news set out.

[*Exeunt* QUEEN, DARNLEY, and LORDS.]

As CHASTELARD is going out, enter MARY BEATON.

MARY BEATON. Have you yet heard? You knew  
of this?

CHASTELARD. I know.  
I was just thinking how such things were made  
And were so fair as this is. Do you know  
She held me here and talked—the most sweet talk  
Men ever heard of?

MARY BEATON. You hate me to the heart.  
What will you do?

CHASTELARD. I know not: die some day,  
But live as long and lightly as I can.  
Will you now love me? faith, but if you do,

It were much better you were dead and hearsed.  
Will you do one thing for me?

MARY BEATON.                      Yea, all things.

CHASTELARD. Speak truth a little, for God's sake:  
indeed

It were no harm to do. Come, will you, sweet?  
Though it be but to please God.

MARY BEATON. What will you do?

CHASTELARD. Aye, true, I must do somewhat. Let me see:

To get between and tread upon his face—  
Catch both her hands and bid men look at them,  
How pure they were—I would do none of these,  
Though they got wedded all the days in the year.  
We may do well yet when all's come and gone.  
I pray you on this wedding night of theirs  
Do but one thing that I shall ask of you,  
And Darnley will not hunger as I shall  
For that good time. Sweet, will you swear me th

MARY BEATON. Yea; though to do it were mortal  
to my soul

As the chief sin.

CHASTELARD. I thank you: let us go.

ACT III.  
THE QUEEN.

SCENE I.—*The Queen's Chamber. Night.*  
*Lights burning in front of the bed.*

*Enter CHASTELARD and MARY BEATON.*

MARY BEATON. Be tender of your feet.

CHASTELARD. I shall not fail:

These ways have light enough to help a man  
That walks with such stirred blood in him as mine.

MARY BEATON. I would yet plead with you to save  
your head:

Nay, let this be then: sir, I chide you not.

Nay, let all come. Do not abide her yet.

CHASTELARD. Have you read never in French books  
the song

Called the Duke's Song, some boy made ages back,  
A song of drag-nets hauled across thwart seas  
And plucked up with rent sides, and caught therein  
A strange-haired woman with sad singing lips,  
Cold in the cheek like any stray of sea.  
And sweet to touch? so that men seeing her face,  
And how she sighed out little Ahs of pain  
And soft cries sobbing sideways from her mouth,

Fell in hot love, and having lain with her  
Died soon? one time I could have told it through:  
Now I have kissed the sea-witch on her eyes  
And my lips ache with it: but I shall sleep  
Full soon, and a good space of sleep.

MARY BEATON. Alas!

CHASTELARD. What makes you sigh though I be  
found a fool?

You have no blame: and for my death, sweet friend,  
I never could have lived long either way.  
Why, as I live, the joy I have of this  
Would make men mad that were not mad with love;  
I hear my blood sing, and my lifted heart  
Is like a springing water blown of wind  
For pleasure of this deed. Now, in God's name,  
I swear if there be danger in delight  
I must die now: if joys have deadly teeth,  
I'll have them bite my soul to death, and end  
In the old asp's way, Egyptian-wise; be killed  
In a royal purple fashion. Look, my love  
Would kill me if my body were past hurt  
Of any man's hand; and to die thereof,  
I say, is sweeter than all sorts of life.  
I would not have her love me now, for then  
I should die meanlier some time. I am safe,  
Sure of her face, my life's end in her sight,  
My blood shed out about her feet—by God,  
My heart feels drunken when I think of it.  
See you, she will not rid herself of me,  
Not though she slay me: her sweet lips and life  
Will smell of my spilt blood.

MARY BEATON.

Give me good night.

*Chastelard and Mary Stuart.*

5

CHASTELARD. Yea, and good thanks.

[*Exit* MARY BEAT

Here is the very place:

Here has her body bowed the pillows in  
And here her head thrust under made the sheet  
Smell soft of her mixed hair and spice: even here  
Her arms pushed back the coverlet, pulled here  
The golden silken curtain halfway in  
It may be, and made room to lean out loose,  
Fair tender fallen arms. Now, if God would,  
Doubtless he might take pity on my soul  
To give me three clear hours, and then red hell  
Snare me for ever: this were merciful:  
If I were God now I should do thus much.  
I must die next, and this were not so hard  
For him to let me eat sweet fruit and die  
With my lips sweet from it. For one shall have  
This fare for common days'-bread, which to me  
Should be a touch kept always on my sense  
To make hell soft, yea, the keen pain of hell  
Soft as the loosening of wound arms in sleep.  
Ah, love is good, and the worst part of it  
More than all things but death. She will be here  
In some small while, and see me face to face  
That am to give up life for her and go  
Where a man lies with all his loves put out  
And his lips full of earth. I think on her,  
And the old pleasure stings and makes half-tears  
Under mine eyelids. Prithee, love, come fast,  
That I may die soon; yea, some kisses through,  
I shall die joyfully enough, so God  
Keep me alive till then. I feel her feet

Coming far off; now must I hold my heart,  
Steadying my blood to see her patiently.

*[Hides himself by the bed.]*

*Enter the QUEEN and DARNLEY.*

QUEEN. Nay, now go back: I have sent off my folk,  
Maries and all. Pray you, let be my hair;  
I cannot twist the gold thread out of it  
That you wound in so close. Look, here it clings:  
Ah! now you mar my hair unwinding it.  
Do me no hurt, sir.

DARNLEY. I would do you ease;  
Let me stay here.

QUEEN. Nay, will you go, my lord?

DARNLEY. Eh? would you use me as a girl does  
fruit,  
Touched with her mouth and pulled away for game  
To look thereon ere her lips feed? but see,  
By God, I fare the worse for you.

QUEEN. Fair sir,  
Give me this hour to watch with and say prayers:  
You have not faith—it needs me to say prayers,  
That with commending of this deed to God  
I may get grace for it.

DARNLEY. Why, lacks it grace?  
Is not all wedlock gracious of itself?

QUEEN. Nay, that I know not of. Come, sweet, be  
hence.

DARNLEY. You have a sort of jewel in your neck  
That's like mine here.

QUEEN. Keep off your hands and go:  
You have no courtesy to be a king.

DARNLEY. Well, I will go: nay, but I thwart you not.



Do as you will, and get you grace; farewell,  
And for my part, grace keep this watch with me!  
For I need grace to bear with you so much. [Exit.

QUEEN. So, he is forth. Let me behold myself;  
I am too pale to be so hot; I marvel  
So little colour should be bold in the face  
When the blood is not quieted. I have  
But a brief space to cool my thoughts upon.  
If one should wear the hair thus heaped and curled  
Would it look best? or this way in the neck?  
Could one ungirdle in such wise one's heart

[Taking off her girdle.

And ease it inwards as the waist is eased  
By slackening of the slid clasp on it!  
How soft the silk is—gracious colour too;  
Violet shadows like new veins thrown up  
Each arm, and gold to fleck the faint sweet green  
Where the wrist lies thus eased. I am right glad  
I have no maids about to hasten me—  
So I will rest and see my hair shed down  
On either silk side of my woven sleeves,  
Get some new way to bind it back with—yea,  
Fair mirror-glass, I am well ware of you,  
Yea, I know that, I am quite beautiful.  
How my hair shines!—Fair face, be friends with me  
And I will sing to you; look in my face  
Now, and your mouth must help the song in mine.

*Alys la châtelaine  
Voit venir de par Seine  
Thiebault le capitaine  
Qui parle ainsi:*

Was that the wind in the casement? nay, no more  
 But the comb drawn through half my hissing hair  
 Laid on my arms—yet my flesh moved at it.

*Dans ma camaille  
 Plus de clou qui vaille,  
 Dans ma cotte-maille  
 Plus de fer aussi.*

Ah, but I wrong the ballad-verse: what's good  
 In such frayed fringes of old rhymes, to make  
 Their broken burden lag with us? meseems  
 I could be sad now if I fell to think  
 The least sad thing; aye, that sweet lady's fool,  
 Fool sorrow, would make merry with mine eyes  
 For a small thing. Nay, but I will keep glad,  
 Nor shall old sorrow be false friends with me.  
 But my first wedding was not like to this—  
 Fair faces then and laughter and sweet game,  
 And a pale little mouth that clung on mine  
 When I had kissed him by the faded eyes  
 And either thin cheek beating with faint blood.  
 Well, he was sure to die soon; I do think  
 He would have given his body to be slain,  
 Having embraced my body. Now, God knows,  
 I have no man to do as much for me  
 As give me but a little of his blood  
 To fill my beauty from, though I go down  
 Pale to my grave for want—I think not. Pale—  
 I am too pale surely—Ah!

*[Sees him in the glass, coming forward.]*

CHASTELARD.

Be not afraid.

QUEEN. Saint Mary! what a shaken wit have I!

Nay, is it you? who let you through the doors?  
Where be my maidens? which way got you in?  
Nay, but stand up, kiss not my hands so hard;  
By God's fair body, if you but breathe on them  
You are just dead and slain at once. What adder  
Has bit you mirthful mad? for by this light  
A man to have his head laughed off for mirth  
Is no great jest. Lay not your eyes on me;  
What, would you not be slain?

CHASTELARD.

I pray you, madam,  
Bear with me a brief space and let me speak.  
I will not touch your garments even, nor speak  
But in soft wise, and look some other way,  
If that it like you; for I came not here  
For pleasure of the eyes; yet, if you will,  
Let me look on you.

QUEEN.

As you will, fair sir.  
Give me that coif to gather in my hair—  
I thank you—and my girdle—nay, that side.  
Speak, if you will: yet if you will be gone,  
Why, you shall go, because I hate you not.  
You know that I might slay you with my lips,  
With calling out? but I will hold my peace.

CHASTELARD. Yea, do some while. I had a thing  
to say;

I know not wholly what thing. O my sweet,  
I am come here to take farewell of love  
That I have served, and life that I have lived  
Made up of love, here in the sight of you  
That all my life's time I loved more than God,  
Who quits me thus with bitter death for it.  
*For you well know that I must shortly die,*

My life being wound about you as it is,  
Who love me not; yet do not hate me, sweet,  
But tell me wherein I came short of love;  
For doubtless I came short of a just love,  
And fell in some fool's fault that angered you.  
Now that I talk men dig my grave for me  
Out in the rain, and in a little while  
I shall be thrust in some sad space of earth  
Out of your eyes; and you, O you my love,  
A newly-wedded lady full of mirth  
And a queen girt with all good people's love,  
You shall be fair and merry in all your days.  
Is this so much for me to have of you?  
Do but speak, sweet: I know these are no words  
A man should say though he were now to die,  
But I am as a child for love, and have  
No strength at heart; yea, I am afraid to die,  
For the harsh dust will lie upon my face  
Too thick to see you past. Look how I love you;  
I did so love you always, that your face  
Seen through my sleep has wrung mine eyes to tears  
For pure delight in you. Why do you thus?  
You answer not, but your lips curl in twain  
And your face moves; there, I shall make you weep  
And be a coward too; it were much best  
I should be slain.

QUEEN. Yea, best such folk were slain;  
Why should they live to cozen fools with lies?  
You would swear now you have used me faithfully  
Shall I not make you swear? I am ware of you:  
You will not do it; nay, for the fear of God  
You will not swear. Come, I am merciful;

God made a foolish woman, making me,  
And I have loved your mistress with whole heart;  
Say you do love her, you shall marry her  
And she give thanks: yet I could wish your love  
Had not so lightly chosen forth a face;  
For your fair sake, because I hate you not.

CHASTELARD. What is to say? why, you do surely  
know

That since my days were counted for a man's  
I have loved you; yea, how past help and sense,  
Whatever thing was bitter to my love,  
I have loved you; how when I rode in war  
Your face went floated in among men's helms,  
Your voice went through the shriek of slipping swords;  
Yea, and I never have loved women well,  
Seeing always in my sight I had your lips  
Curled over, red and sweet; and the soft space  
Of carven brows, and splendour of great throat  
Swayed lily-wise: what pleasure should one have  
To wind his arms about a lesser love?  
I have seen you; why, this were joy enough  
For God's eyes up in heaven, only to see  
And to come never nearer than I am.  
Why, it was in my flesh, my bone and blood,  
Bound in my brain, to love you; yea, and writ  
All my heart over: if I would lie to you  
I doubt I could not lie. Ah, you see now,  
You know now well enough; yea, there, sweet love,  
Let me kiss there.

QUEEN.

I love you best of them.

Clasp me quite round till your lips cleave on mine,  
False mine, that did you wrong. Forgive them dearly,

As you are sweet to them; for by love's love  
I am not that evil woman in my heart  
That laughs at a rent faith. O Chastelard,  
Since this was broken to me of your new love  
I have not seen the face of a sweet hour.  
Nay, if there be no pardon in a man,  
What shall a woman have for loving him?  
Pardon me, sweet.

CHASTELARD. Yea, so I pardon you,  
And this side now; the first way. Would God please  
To slay me so! who knows how he might please?  
Now I am thinking, if you know it not,  
How I might kill you, kiss your breath clean out,  
And take your soul to bring mine through to God  
That our two souls might close and be one twain  
Or a twain one, and God himself want skill  
To set us either severally apart.  
O, you must overlive me many years,  
And many years my soul be in waste hell;  
But when some time God can no more refrain  
To lay death like a kiss across your lips,  
And great lords bear you clothed with funeral things,  
And your crown girded over deadly brows,  
Then after all your happy reach of life  
For pity you shall touch me with your eyes,  
Remembering love was fellow with my flesh  
Here in sweet earth, and make me well of love  
And heal my many years with piteousness.

QUEEN. You talk too sadly and too feignedly.

CHASTELARD. Too sad, but not too feigned; I am sad  
That I shall die here without feigning thus;  
And without feigning I were fain to live.

QUEEN. Alas, you will be taken presently  
And then you are but dead. Pray you get hence.

CHASTELARD. I will not.

QUEEN. Nay, for God's love be away;  
You will be slain and I get shame. God's mercy!  
You were stark mad to come here; kiss me, sweet.  
Oh, I do love you more than all men! yea,  
Take my lips to you, close mine eyes up fast,  
So you leave hold a little: there, for pity,  
Abide now, and to-morrow come to me.  
Nay, lest one see red kisses in my throat—  
Dear God! what shall I give you to be gone?

CHASTELARD. I will not go. Look, here's full night  
grown up;  
Why should I seek to sleep away from here?  
The place is soft and the lights burn for sleep;  
Be not you moved; I shall lie well enough.

QUEEN. You are utterly undone. Sweet, by my life,  
You shall be saved with taking ship at once.  
For if you stay this foolish love's hour out  
There is not ten days' likely life in you.  
This is no choice.

CHASTELARD. Nay, for I will not go.

QUEEN. Oh me! this is that Bayard's blood of yours  
That makes you mad; yea, and you shall not stay.  
I do not understand. Mind, you must die.  
Alas, poor lord, you have no sense of me;  
I shall be deadly to you.

CHASTELARD. Yea, I saw that;  
But I saw not that when my death's day came  
You could be quite so sweet to me.

QUEEN. My love!

If I could kiss my heart's root out on you  
You would taste love hid at the core of me.

CHASTELARD. Kiss me twice more. This beautiful  
bowed head

That has such hair with kissing ripples in  
And shivering soft eyelashes and brows  
With fluttered blood; but laugh a little, sweetly,  
That I may see your sad mouth's laughing look  
I have used sweet hours in seeing. O, will you weep?  
I pray you do not weep.

QUEEN. Nay, dear, I have  
No tears in me; I never shall weep much,  
I think, in all my life: I have wept for wrath  
Sometimes and for mere pain, but for love's pity  
I cannot weep at all. I would to God  
You loved me less; I give you all I can  
For all this love of yours, and yet I am sure  
I shall live out the sorrow of your death  
And be glad afterwards. You know I am sorry.  
I should weep now; forgive me for your part,  
God made me hard, I think. Alas, you see  
I had fain been other than I am.

CHASTELARD. Yea, love.  
Comfort your heart. What way am I to die?

QUEEN. Ah, will you go yet, sweet?

CHASTELARD. No, by God's body.  
You will not see? how shall I make you see?  
Look, it may be love was a sort of curse  
Made for my plague and mixed up with my days  
Somewise in their beginning; or indeed  
A bitter birth begotten of sad stars  
At mine own body's birth, that heaven might make



My life taste sharp where other men drank sweet;  
But whether in heavy body or broken soul,  
I know it must go on to be my death.  
There was the matter of my fate in me  
When I was fashioned first, and given such life  
As goes with a sad end; no fault but God's.  
Yea, and for all this I am not penitent:  
You see I am perfect in these sins of mine,  
I have my sins writ in a book to read;  
Now I shall die and be well done with this.  
But I am sure you cannot see such things,  
God knows I blame you not.

QUEEN.

What shall be said?

You know most well that I am sorrowful.  
But you should chide me. Sweet, you have seen fair  
wars,  
Have seen men slain and ridden red in them;  
Why will you die a chamberer's death like this?  
What, shall no praise be written of my knight,  
For my fame's sake?

CHASTELARD.

Nay, no great praise, I think;

I will no more; what should I do with death,  
Though I died goodly out of sight of you?  
I have gone once: here am I set now, sweet,  
Till the end come. That is your husband, hark,  
He knocks at the outer door. Kiss me just once.  
You know now all you have to say. Nay, love,  
Let him come quickly.

*Enter DARNLEY, and afterwards the MARIES.*

DARNLEY.

Yea, what thing is here?

Aye, this was what the doors shut fast upon—

Aye, trust you to be fast at prayer, my sweet?  
By God I have a mind——

CHASTELARD.                      What mind then, sir?  
A liar's lewd mind, to coin sins for jest,  
Because you take me in such wise as this?  
Look you, I have to die soon, and I swear,  
That I am no liar but a free knight and lord,  
I shall die clear of any sin to you,  
Save that I came for no good will of mine;  
I am no carle, I play fair games with faith,  
And by mine honour for my sake I swear  
I say but truth; for no man's sake save mine,  
Lest I die shamed. Madam, I pray you say  
I am no liar; you know me what I am,  
A sinful man and shortly to be slain,  
That in a simple insolence of love  
Have stained with a fool's eyes your holy hours  
And with a fool's words put your pity out;  
Nathless you know if I be liar or no,  
Wherefore for God's sake give me grace to swear  
(Yea, for mine too) how past all praise you are  
And stainless of all shame; and how all men  
Lie, saying you are not most good and innocent,  
Yea, the one thing good as God.

DARNLEY.                      O sir, we know  
You can swear well, being taken; you fair French  
Dare swallow God's name for a lewd love-sake  
As it were water. Nay, we know, we know;  
Save your sweet breath now lest you lack it soon;  
We are simple, we; we have not heard of you.  
Madam, by God you are well shamed in him:  
Aye, trust you to be fingering in one's face,

Play with one's neck-chain? ah, your maiden's man,  
A relic of your people's!

CHASTELARD. Hold your peace,  
Or I will set an edge on your own lie  
Shall scar yourself. Madam, have out your guard;  
'Tis time I were got hence.

QUEEN. Sweet Hamilton,  
Hold you my hand and help me to sit down.  
O Henry, I am beaten from my wits—  
Let me have time and live; call out my people—  
Bring forth some armed guard to lay hold on him;  
But see no man be slain. Sirs, hide your swords;  
I will not have men slain.

DARNLEY. What, is this true?  
Call the queen's people—help the queen there, you—  
Ho, sirs, come in.

*Enter some with the Guard.*

QUEEN. Lay hold upon that man;  
Bear him away, but see he have no hurt.

CHASTELARD. Into your hands I render up myself  
With a free heart; deal with me how you list,  
But courteously, I pray you. Take my sword.  
Farewell, great queen; the sweetness in your look  
Makes life look bitter on me. Farewell, sirs.

*[He is taken out.]*

DARNLEY. Yea, pluck him forth, and have him  
hanged by dawn;  
He shall find bed enow to sleep. God's love!  
That such a knave should be a knight like this!

QUEEN. Sir, peace awhile; this shall be as I  
please;

Take patience to you. Lords, I pray you see  
All be done goodly; look they wrong him not.  
Carmichael, you shall sleep with me to-night;  
I am sorely shaken, even to the heart. Fair lords,  
I thank you for your care. Sweet, stay by me.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.  
MURRAY.

SCENE I.—*The Queen's Lodging at St. Andrew's.*

*The QUEEN and the four MARIES.*

QUEEN. Why will you break my heart with praying  
to me?

You Seyton, you Carmichael, you have wits,  
You are not all run to tears; you do not think  
It is my wrath or will that whets this axe  
Against his neck?

MARY SEYTON. Nay, these three weeks ago  
I said the queen's wrath was not sharp enough  
To shear a neck.

QUEEN. Sweet, and you did me right,  
And look you, what my mercy bears to fruit,  
Danger and deadly speech and a fresh fault  
Before the first was cool in people's lips;  
A goodly mercy: and I wash hands of it.—  
Speak you, there; have you ever found me sharp?  
You weep and whisper with sloped necks and heads  
Like two sick birds; do you think shame of me?  
Nay, I thank God none can think shame of me;  
But am I bitter, think you, to men's faults?  
*I think I am too merciful, too meek:*

Why if I could I would yet save this man;  
'Tis just boy's madness; a soft stripe or two  
Would do to scourge the fault in his French blood.  
I would fain let him go. You, Hamilton,  
You have a heart thewed harder than my heart;  
When mine would threat it sighs, and wrath in it  
Has a bird's flight and station, starves before  
It can well feed or fly: my pulse of wrath  
Sounds tender as the running down of tears.  
You are the hardest woman I have known,  
Your blood has frost and cruel gall in it,  
You hold men off with bitter lips and eyes—  
Such maidens should serve England; now, perfoy,  
I doubt you would have got him slain at once.  
Come, would you not? come, would you let him live?

MARY HAMILTON. Yes—I think yes; I cannot tell;  
maybe

I would have seen him punished.

QUEEN. Look you now,  
There's maiden mercy; I would have him live—  
For all my wifhood maybe I weep too:  
Here's a mere maiden falls to slaying at once,  
Small shrift for her; God keep us from such hearts!  
I am a queen too that would have him live,  
But one that has no wrong and is no queen,  
She would—What are you saying there, you twain?

MARY CARMICHAEL. I said a queen's face and so  
fair an one's  
Would lose no grace for giving grace away;  
That gift comes back upon the mouth it left  
And makes it sweeter, and sets fresh red on it.

*Chastelard and Mary Stuart.*

QUEEN. This comes of sonnets when the dance  
draws breath;

These talking times will make a dearth of grace.  
But you—what ails you that your lips are shut?  
Weep, if you will; here are four friends of yours  
To weep as fast for pity of your tears.  
Do you desire him dead? nay, but men say  
He was your friend, he fought them on your side,  
He made you songs—God knows what songs he made!  
Speak you for him a little: will you not?

MARY BEATON. Madam, I have no words.

QUEEN. No words? no pity—  
Have you no mercies for such men? God help!  
It seems I am the meekest heart on earth—  
Yea, the one tender woman left alive,  
And knew it not. I will not let him live,  
For all my pity of him.

MARY BEATON. Nay, but, madam,  
For God's love look a little to this thing.  
If you do slay him you are but shamed to death;  
All men will cry upon you, women weep,  
Turning your sweet name bitter with their tears;  
Red shame grow up out of your memory  
And burn his face that would speak well of you;  
You shall have no good word nor pity, none,  
Till some such end be fallen upon you: nay,  
I am but cold, I knew I had no words,  
I will keep silence.

QUEEN. Yea now, as I live,  
I wist not of it: troth, he shall not die.  
See you, I am pitiful, compassionate,  
I would not have men slain for my love's sake,

But if he live to do me three times wrong,  
Why then my shame would grow up green and red  
Like any flower. I am not whole at heart;  
In faith, I wot not what such things should be;  
I doubt it is but dangerous; he must die.

MARY BEATON. Yea, but you will not slay him.

QUEEN. Swear me that,  
I'll say he shall not die for your oath's sake.  
What will you do for grief when he is dead?

MARY BEATON. Nothing for grief, but hold my peace  
and die.

QUEEN. Why, for your sweet sake one might let  
him live;

But the first fault was a green seed of shame,  
And now the flower, and deadly fruit will come  
With apple-time in autumn. By my life,  
I would they had slain him there in Edinburgh;  
But I reprove him; lo the thank I get,  
To set the base folk muttering like smoked bees  
Of shame and love, and how love comes of shame,  
And how the queen loves shame that comes of love;  
Yet I say nought and go about my ways,  
And this mad fellow that I respited  
Being forth and free, lo now the second time  
Ye take him by my bed in wait. Now see  
If I can get goodwill to pardon him;  
With what a face may I crave leave of men  
To respite him, being young and a good knight  
And mad for perfect love? shall I go say,  
*Dear lords, because ye took him shamefully,*  
*Let him not die; because his fault is foul,*  
*Let him not die; because if he do live*



*I shall be held a harlot of all men,  
I pray you, sweet sirs, that he may not die?*

MARY BEATON. Madam, for me I would not have  
him live;

Mine own heart's life was ended with my fame,  
And my life's breath will shortly follow them;  
So that I care not much; for you wot well  
I have lost love and shame and fame and all  
To no good end; nor while he had his life  
Have I got good of him that was my love,  
Save that for courtesy (which may God quit)  
He kissed me once as one might kiss for love  
Out of great pity for me; saving this,  
He never did me grace in all his life.  
And when you have slain him, madam, it may be  
I shall get grace of him in some new way  
In a new place, if God have care of us.

QUEEN. Bid you my brother to me presently.

[*Exeunt* MARIES.]

And yet the thing is pitiful; I would  
There were some way. To send him overseas,  
Out past the long firths to the cold keen sea  
Where the sharp sound is that one hears up here—  
Or hold him in strong prison till he died—  
He would die shortly—or to set him free  
And use him softly till his brains were healed—  
There is no way. Now never while I live  
Shall we twain love together any more  
Nor sit at rhyme as we were used to do,  
Nor each kiss other only with the eyes  
A great way off ere hand or lip could reach;  
There is no way.

*Enter MURRAY.* O, you are welcome, sir;  
You know what need I have; but I praise heaven,  
Having such need, I have such help of you.  
I do believe no queen God ever made  
Was better holpen than I look to be.  
What, if two brethren love not heartily,  
Who shall be good to either one of them?

MURRAY. Madam, I have great joy of your good  
will.

QUEEN. I pray you, brother, use no courtesies:  
I have some fear you will not suffer me  
When I shall speak. Fear is a fool, I think,  
Yet hath he wit enow to fool my wits,  
Being but a woman's. Do not answer me  
Till you shall know; yet if you have a word  
I shall be fain to hear it; but I think  
There is no word to help me; no man's word:  
There be two things yet that should do me good,  
A speeding arm and a great heart. My lord,  
I am soft-spirited as women are,  
And ye wot well I have no harder heart:  
Yea, with my will I would not slay a thing,  
But all should live right sweetly if I might;  
So that man's blood-spilling lies hard on me.  
I have a work yet for mine honour's sake,  
A thing to do, God wot I know not how,  
Nor how to crave it of you: nay, by heaven,  
I will not shame myself to show it you:  
I have not heart.

MURRAY. Why, if it may be done  
With any honour, or with good men's excuse,  
I shall well do it.

- QUEEN. I would I wist that well.  
Sir, do you love me?
- MURRAY. Yea, you know I do.
- QUEEN. In faith, you should well love me, for I  
love  
The least man in your following for your sake  
With a whole sister's heart.
- MURRAY. Speak simply, madam;  
I must obey you, being your bounden man.
- QUEEN. Sir, so it is you know what things have  
been,  
Even to the endangering of mine innocent name,  
And by no fault, but by men's evil will;  
If Chastelard have trial openly,  
I am but shamed.
- MURRAY. This were a wound indeed,  
If your good name should lie upon his lip.
- QUEEN. I will the judges put him not to plead,  
For my fame's sake; he shall not answer them.
- MURRAY. What, think you he will speak against  
your fame?
- QUEEN. I know not; men might feign belief of him  
For hate of me; it may be he will speak;  
In brief, I will not have him held to proof.
- MURRAY. Well, if this be, what good is to be done?
- QUEEN. Is there no way but he must speak to them,  
Being had to trial plainly?
- MURRAY. I think, none.
- QUEEN. Now mark, my lord; I swear he will not  
speak.
- MURRAY. It were the best if you could make that  
*sure.*

QUEEN. There is one way. Look, sir, he shall not do it:

Shall not, or will not, either is one way;  
I speak as I would have you understand.

MURRAY. Let me not guess at you; speak certainly.

QUEEN. You will not mind me: let him be removed;  
Take means to get me surety: there be means.

MURRAY. So, in your mind, I have to slay the man?

QUEEN. Is there a mean for me to save the man?

MURRAY. Truly I see no mean except your love.

QUEEN. What love is that, my lord? what think  
you of,

Talking of love and of love's mean in me  
And of your guesses and of slaying him?  
Why, I say nought, have nought to say: God help me!  
I bid you but take surety of the man,  
Get him removed.

MURRAY. Come, come, be clear with me;  
You bid me to despatch him privily.

QUEEN. God send me sufferance! I bid you, sir?  
Nay, do not go: what matter if I did?  
Nathless I never bade you; no, by God.  
Be not so wroth; you are my brother born;  
Why do you dwell upon me with such eyes?  
For love of God you should not bear me hard.

MURRAY. What, are you made of flesh?

QUEEN. O, now I see  
You had rather lose your wits to do me harm  
Than keep sound wits to help me.

MURRAY. It is right strange;  
The worst man living hath some fear, some love,  
Holds somewhat dear a little for life's sake,

Keeps fast to some compassion; you have none;  
You know of nothing that remembrance knows  
To make you tender. I must slay the man?  
Nay, I will do it.

QUEEN. Do, if you be not mad.  
I am sorry for him; and he must needs die.  
I would I were assured you hate me not:  
I have no heart to slay him by my will.  
I pray you think not bitterly of me.

MURRAY. Is it your pleasure such a thing were done?

QUEEN. Yea, by God's body is it, certainly.

MURRAY. Nay, for your love then, and for honour's  
sake,

This thing must be.

QUEEN. Yea, should I set you on?  
Even for my love then, I beseech you, sir,  
To seek him out, and lest he prate of me  
To put your knife into him ere he come forth:  
Meseems this were not such wild work to do.

MURRAY. I'll have him in the prison taken off.

QUEEN. I am bounden to you, even for my name's  
sake,

When that is done.

MURRAY. I pray you fear me not.  
Farewell. I would such things were not to do,  
Or not for me; yea, not for any man. [Exit.

QUEEN. Alas, what honour have I to give thanks?  
I would he had denied me: I had held my peace  
Thenceforth for ever; but he wrung out the word,  
Caught it before my lip, was fain of it—  
It was his fault to put it in my mind,  
Yea, and to feign a loathing of his fault,

Now is he about devising my love's death,  
And nothing loth. Nay, since he must needs die,  
Would he were dead and come alive again  
And I might keep him safe. He doth live now  
And I may do what love I will to him;  
But by to-morrow he will be stark dead,  
Stark slain and dead; and for no sort of love  
Will he so much as kiss me half a kiss.  
Were this to do I would not do it again.

*Re-enter MURRAY.*

What, have you taken order? is it done?  
It were impossible to do so soon.  
Nay, answer me.

MURRAY. Madam, I will not do it.

QUEEN. How did you say? I pray, sir, speak again:  
I know not what you said.

MURRAY. I say I will not;  
I have thought thereof, and have made up my heart  
To have no part in this: look you to it.

QUEEN. O, for God's sake! you will not have me  
shamed?

MURRAY. I will not dip my hand into your sin.

QUEEN. It were a good deed to deliver me;  
I am but woman, of one blood with you,  
A feeble woman; put me not to shame;  
I pray you of your pity do me right.  
Yea, and no fleck of blood shall cleave to you  
For a just deed.

MURRAY. I know not: I will none.

QUEEN. O, you will never let him speak to them  
To put me in such shame? why, I should die  
Out of pure shame and mine own burning blood;

Yea, my face feels the shame lay hold on it,  
I am half burnt already in my thought;  
Take pity of me. Think how shame slays a man;  
How shall I live then? would you have me dead?  
I pray you for our dead dear father's sake,  
Let not men mock at me. Nay, if he speak,  
I shall be sung in mine own towns. Have pity.  
What, will you let men stone me in the ways?

MURRAY. Madam, I shall take pains the best I may  
To save your honour, and what thing lieth in me  
That will I do, but no close manslayings.  
I will not have God's judgment gripe my throat  
When I am dead, to hale me into hell  
For a man's sake slain on this wise. Take heed.  
See you to that. [Exit.]

QUEEN. One of you maidens there  
Bid my lord hither. Now by Mary's soul,  
He shall not die and bring me into shame.  
There's treason in you like a fever, hot,  
My holy-natured brother, cheek and eye:  
You look red through with it: sick, honour-sick,  
Specked with the blain of treason, leper-like—  
A scrupulous fair traitor with clean lips—  
If one should sue to hell to do him good  
He were as brotherly holpen as I am.  
This man must live and say no harm of me;  
I may reprieve and cast him forth; yea, so—  
This were the best; or if he die midway—  
Yea, anything, so that he die not here.

[To the MARIES within.]

Fetch hither Darnley. Nay, ye gape on me—  
What, doth he sleep, or feeds, or plays at games?

Why, I would see him; I am weary for his sake;  
Bid my lord in.—Nathless he will but chide;  
Nay, flee and laugh: what should one say to him?  
There were some word if one could hit on it;  
Some way to close with him: I wot not.—Sir,

*Enter DARNLEY.*

Please it your love I have a suit to you.

DARNLEY. What sort of suit?

QUEEN. Nay, if you be not friends—  
I have no suit towards mine enemies.

DARNLEY. Eh, do I look now like your enemy?

QUEEN. You have a way of peering under brow  
I do not like. If you see anything  
In me that irks you I will painfully  
Labour to lose it: do but show me favour,  
And as I am your faithful humble wife  
This foolishness shall be removed in me.

DARNLEY. Why do you laugh and mock me with  
stretched hands?  
Faith, I see no such thing.

QUEEN. That is well seen.  
Come, I will take my heart between my lips,  
Use it not hardly. Sir, my suit begins;  
That you would please to make me that I am,  
(In sooth I think I am) mistress and queen  
Of mine own people.

DARNLEY. Why, this is no suit;  
This is a simple matter, and your own.

QUEEN. It was, before God made you king of me.

DARNLEY. No king, by God's grace; were I such a  
king  
I'd sell my kingdom for six roods of rye.



QUEEN. You are too sharp upon my words; I would  
Have leave of you to free a man condemned.

DARNLEY. What man is that, sweet?

QUEEN. Such a mad poor man  
As God desires us use not cruelly.

DARNLEY. Is there no name a man may call him by?

QUEEN. Nay, my fair master, what fair game is this?  
Why, you do know him, it is Chastelard.

DARNLEY. Aye, is it soothly?

QUEEN. By my life, it is;  
Sweet, as you tender me, so pardon him.

DARNLEY. As he doth tender you, so pardon me;  
For if it were the mean to save my life  
He should not live a day.

QUEEN. Nay, shall not he?

DARNLEY. Look what an evil wit old Fortune hath:  
Why, I came here to get his time cut off.  
This second fault is meat for lewd men's mouths;  
You were best have him slain at once: 'tis hot.

QUEEN. Give me the warrant, and sit down, my lord.  
Why, I will sign it; what, I understand  
How this must be. Should not my name stand here?

DARNLEY. Yea, there, and here the seal.

QUEEN. Aye, so you say.  
Shall I say too what I am thinking of?

DARNLEY. Do, if you will.

QUEEN. I do not like your suit.

DARNLEY. 'Tis of no Frenchman fashion.

QUEEN. No, God wot;  
'Tis nowise great men's fashion in French land  
To clap a headsman's taberd on their backs.

DARNLEY. No, madam?

QUEEN. No; I never wist of that.  
Is it a month gone I did call you lord?  
I chose you by no straying stroke of sight,  
But with my heart to love you heartily.  
Did I wrong then? did mine eye draw my heart?  
I know not; sir, it may be I did wrong:  
And yet to see you I should call it right  
Even yet to love you; and would choose again,  
Again to choose you.

DARNLEY. There, I love you too;  
Take that for sooth, and let me take this hence.

QUEEN. O, do you think I hold you off with words?  
Why, take it then; there is my handwriting,  
And here the hand that you shall slay him with.  
'Tis a fair hand, a maiden-coloured one:  
I doubt yet it has never slain a man.  
You never fought yet save for game, I wis.  
Nay, thank me not, but have it from my sight;  
Go and make haste for fear he be got forth:  
It may be such a man is dangerous;  
Who knows what friends he hath? and by my faith  
I doubt he hath seen some fighting, I do fear  
He hath fought and shed men's blood; ye are wise men  
That will not leave such dangerous things alive;  
'Twere well he died the sooner for your sakes.  
Pray you make haste; it is not fit he live.

DARNLEY. What, will you let him die so easily?

QUEEN. Why, God have mercy! what way should  
one take

To please such people? there's some cunning way,  
Something I miss, out of my simple soul.  
What, must one say "Beseech you do no harm,"

Or "for my love, sweet cousins, be not hard,"  
Or "let him live but till the vane come round"—  
Will such things please you? well then, have your way;  
Sir, I desire you, kneeling down with tears,  
With sighs and tears, fair sir, require of you,  
Considering of my love I bear this man,  
Just for my love's sake let him not be hanged  
Before the sundown; do thus much for me,  
To have a queen's prayers follow after you.

DARNLEY. I know no need for you to gibe at me.

QUEEN. Alack, what heart then shall I have to jest?  
There is no woman jests in such a wise—  
*For the shame's sake I pray you hang him not,  
Seeing how I love him, save indeed in silk,  
Sweet twisted silk of my sad handiwork.*  
Nay, and you will not do so much for me;  
You vex your lip, biting the blood and all:  
Were this so hard, and you compassionate?  
I am in sore case then, and will weep indeed.

DARNLEY. What do you mean to cast such gibes  
at me?

QUEEN. Woe's me, and will you turn my tears to  
thorns?

Nay, set your eyes a little in my face:  
See, do I weep? what will you make of me?  
Will you not swear I love this prisoner?  
Ye are wise, and ye will have it; yet for me  
I wist not of it. We are but feeble fools,  
And love may catch us when we lie asleep.  
And yet God knows we know not this a whit.  
Come, look on me, swear you believe it not:  
*It may be I will take your word for that.*

DARNLEY. Do you not love him? nay, but verily?

QUEEN. Now then, make answer to me verily,  
Which of us twain is wiser? for my part  
I will not swear I love not, if you will;  
Ye be wise men and many men, my lords,  
And ye will have me love him, ye will swear  
That I do love him; who shall say ye lie?  
Look on your paper; maybe I have wept:  
Doubtless I love your hanged man in my heart.  
What, is the writing smutched or gone awry?  
Or blurred—aye, surely so much—with one tear,  
One little sharp tear strayed on it by chance?  
Come, come, the man is deadly dangerous;  
Let him die presently.

DARNLEY. You do not love him;  
Well, yet he need not die; it were right hard  
To hang the fool because you love him not.

QUEEN. You have keen wits and thereto courtesy  
To catch me with. No, let this man not die;  
It were no such perpetual praise to you  
To be his doomsman and in doglike wise  
Bite his brief life in twain.

DARNLEY. Truly it were not.

QUEEN. Then for your honour and my love of you  
(Oh, I do love you! but you know not, sweet,  
You shall see how much), think you for their sake  
He may go free?

DARNLEY. How, freely forth of us?  
But yet he loves you, and being mad with love  
Makes matter for base mouths to chew upon:  
'Twere best he live not yet.

QUEEN. Will you say that?

DARNLEY. Why should he live to breed you bad  
reports  
Let him die first.

QUEEN. Sweet, for your sake, not so.

DARNLEY. Fret not yourself to pity; let him die.

QUEEN. Come, let him live a little; it shall be  
A grace to us.

DARNLEY. By God he dies at once.

QUEEN. Now, by God's mother, if I respite him,  
Though you were all the race of you in one  
And had more tongues than hairs to cry on me  
He should not lose a hair.

DARNLEY. This is mere mercy—  
But you thank God you love him not a whit?

QUEEN. It shall be what it please; and if I please  
It shall be anything. Give me the warrant.

DARNLEY. Nay, for your sake and love of you,  
not I,  
To make it dangerous.

QUEEN. O, God's pity, sir!  
You are tender of me; will you serve me so,  
Against mine own will, shew me so much love,  
Do me good service that I loath being done,  
Out of pure pity?

DARNLEY. Nay, your word shall stand.

QUEEN. What makes you gape so beastlike after  
blood?

Were you not bred up on some hangman's hire  
And dieted with fleshmeats at his hand  
And fed into a fool? Give me that paper.

DARNLEY. Now for that word I will not.

QUEEN. Nay, sweet love,

For your own sake be just a little wise;  
Come, I beseech you.

DARNLEY. Pluck not at my hands.

QUEEN. No, that I will not: I am brain-broken, mad;  
Pity my madness for sweet marriage-sake  
And my great love's; I love you to say this;  
I would not have you cross me, out of love.  
But for true love should I not chafe indeed?  
And now I do not.

DARNLEY. Yea, and late you chid,  
You chafed and jested and blew soft and hard—  
No, for that "fool" you shall not fool me so.

QUEEN. You are no churl, sweet, will you see me  
weep?

Look, I weep now; be friends with my poor tears.  
Think each of them beseeches you of love  
And hath some tongue to cry on you for love  
And speak soft things; for that which loves not you  
Is none of mine, not though they grow of grief  
And grief of you; be not too hard with them.  
You would not of your own heart slay a man;  
Nay, if you will, in God's name make me weep,  
I will not hate you; but at heart, sweet lord,  
Be not at heart my sweet heart's enemy.  
If I had many mighty men to friend  
I would not plead too lovingly with you  
To have your love.

DARNLEY. Why, yet you have my love.

QUEEN. Alas, what shall mine enemies do to me  
If I be used so hardly of my friends?  
Come, sir, you hate me; yet for all your hate  
You cannot have such heart.

DARNLEY.                      What sort of heart?  
I have no heart to be used shamefully  
If you mean that.

QUEEN.                      Would God I loved you not;  
You are too hard to be used lovingly.

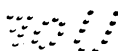
DARNLEY.                      You are moved too much for such a  
   little love  
As you bear me.

QUEEN.                      God knows you do me wrong;  
God knows the heart, sweet, that I love you with.  
Hark you, fair sir, I'd have all well with you;  
Do you not fear at sick men's time of night  
What end may come? are you so sure of heart?  
Is not your spirit surprisable in sleep?  
Have you no evil dreams? Nay, look you, love,  
I will not be flung off you heart and hand,  
I am no snake: but tell me for your love  
Have you no fancies how these things will end  
In the pit's mouth? how all life-deeds will look  
At the grave's edge that lets men into hell?  
For my part, who am weak and woman-eyed,  
It turns my soul to tears: I doubt this blood  
Fallen on our faces when we twain are dead  
Will scar and burn them: yea, for heaven is sweet,  
And loves sweet deeds that smell not of spilt blood.  
Let us not kill: God that made mercy first  
Pities the pitiful for their deed's sake.

DARNLEY.                      Get you some painting; with a cheek  
   like this  
You'll find no faith in listeners.

QUEEN.    How, fair lord?

DARNLEY.                      I say that looking with this face of yours



None shall believe you holy; what, you talk,  
Take mercy in your mouth, eat holiness,  
Put God under your tongue and feed on heaven,  
With fear and faith and—faith, I know not what—  
And look as though you stood and saw men slain  
To make you game and laughter: nay, your eyes  
Threaten as unto blood. What will you do  
To make men take your sweet word? pitiful—  
You are pitiful as he that's hired for death  
And loves the slaying yet better than the hire.

QUEEN. You are wise that live to threat and tell  
me so;

Do you love life too much?

DARNLEY. O, now you are sweet,  
Right tender now: you love not blood nor death,  
You are too tender.

QUEEN. Yea, too weak, too soft:  
Sweet, do not mock me, for my love's sake; see  
How soft a thing I am. Will you be hard?  
The heart you have, has it no sort of fear?

DARNLEY. Take off your hand and let me go my  
way

And do my deed, and when the doing is past  
I will come home and teach you tender things  
Out of my love till you forget my wrath.  
I will be angry when I see good need,  
And will grow gentle after, fear not that;  
You shall get no wrong of my wrongdoing.  
So I take leave.

QUEEN. Take what you will; take all;  
You have taken half my heart away with words:  
Take all I have, and take no leave; I have



No leave to give: yea, shortly shall lack leave,  
I think, to live; but I crave none of you;  
I would have none: yet for the love I have,  
If I get ever a mean to show it you,  
I pray God put you some day in my hand  
That you may take that too.

DARNLEY. Well, as he please;  
God keep you in such love; and so farewell. [*Exit.*]

QUEEN. So fare I as your lover, but not well.—  
Ah sweet, if God be ever good to me  
To put you in my hand! I am come to shame;  
Let me think now, and let my wits not go;  
God, for dear mercy, let me not forget  
Why I should be so angry; the dull blood  
Beats at my face and blinds me—I am chafed to death,  
And I am shamed; I shall go mad and die.  
Truly I think I did kneel down, did pray,  
Yea, weep (who knows?) it may be—all for that.  
Yea, if I wept not, this was blood brake forth  
And burnt mine eyelids; I will have blood back,  
And wash them cool in the hottest of his heart,  
Or I will slay myself: I cannot tell:  
I have given gold for brass, and lo the pay  
Cleaves to my fingers: there's no way to mend—  
Not while life stays: would God that it were gone!  
The fool will feed upon my fame and laugh;  
Till one seal up his tongue and lips with blood,  
He carries half my honour and good name  
Between his teeth. Lord God, mine head will fail!  
When have I done thus since I was alive?  
And these ill times will deal but ill with me—  
*My old love slain, and never a new to help,*

And my wits gone, and my blithe use of life,  
And all the grace was with me. Love—perchance  
If I save love I shall well save myself.  
I could find heart to bid him take such fellows  
And kill them to my hand. I was the fool  
To sue to these and shame myself: God knows  
I was a queen born, I will hold their heads  
Here in my hands for this. Which of you waits?

*Enter MARY BEATON and MARY CARMICHAEL.*

No maiden of them?—what, no more than this?

MARY CARMICHAEL. Madam, the lady Seyton is gone  
forth;

She is ill at heart with watching.

QUEEN.

Aye, at heart—

All girls must have such tender sides to the heart  
They break for one night's watching, ache to death  
For an hour's pity, for a half-hour's love—  
Wear out before the watches, die by dawn,  
And ride at noon to burial. God's my pity!  
Where's Hamilton? doth she ail too? at heart,  
I warrant her at heart.

MARY BEATON.

I know not, madam.

QUEEN. What, sick or dead? I am well holpen of  
you;

Come hither to me. What pale blood you have—  
Is it for fear you turn such cheeks to me?  
Why, if I were so loving, by my hand,  
I would have set my head upon the chance,  
And loosed him though I died. What will you do?  
Have you no way?

MARY BEATON. None but your mercy.

QUEEN.

Aye?

Why then the thing is piteous. Think, for God's sake—  
Is there no loving way to fetch him forth?  
Nay, what a white thin-blooded thing is love,  
To help no more than this doth! Were I in love,  
I would unbar the ways to-night and then  
Laugh death to death to-morrow, mock him dead;  
I think you love well with one half your heart,  
And let fear keep the other. Hark you now,  
You said there was some friend durst break my bars—  
Some Scotch name—faith, as if I wist of it!  
Ye have such heavy wits to help one with—  
Some man that had some mean to save him by—  
Tush, I must be at pains for you!

MARY BEATON.

Nay, madam,

It were no boot; he will not be let forth.

QUEEN. I say, the name. O, Robert Erskine—yea,  
A fellow of some heart: what saith he?

MARY BEATON.

Madam,

The thing was sound all through, yea, all went well,  
But for all prayers that we could make to him  
He would not fly: we cannot get him forth.

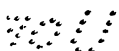
QUEEN. Great God! that men should have such  
wits as this!

I have a mind to let him die for that;  
And yet I wot not. Said he, he loathed his life?

MARY BEATON. He says your grace given would  
scathe yourself,

And little grace for such a grace as that  
Be with the little of his life he kept  
To cast off some time more unworthily.

QUEEN. God help me! what should wise folk do  
with him?



These men be weaker-witted than mere fools  
When they fall mad once; yet by Mary's soul  
I am sorrier for him than for men right wise.  
God wot a fool that were more wise than he  
Would love me something worse than Chastelard,  
Aye, and his own soul better. Do you think  
(There's no such other sort of fool alive)  
That he may live?

MARY BEATON. Yea, by God's mercy, madam,  
To your great praise and honour from all men  
If you should keep him living.

QUEEN. By God's light,  
I have good will to do it. Are you sure,  
If I would pack him with a pardon hence,  
He would speak well of me—not hint and halt,  
Smile and look back, sigh and say love runs out,  
But times have been—with some loose laugh cut short,  
Bit off at lip—eh?

MARY BEATON. No, by heaven he would not.

QUEEN. You know how quickly one may be belied—  
Faith, you should know it—I never thought the worst,  
One may touch love and come with clean hands off—  
But you should know it. What, he will not fly—  
Not though I wink myself asleep, turn blind—  
Which that I will I say not?

MARY BEATON. Nay, not he;  
We had good hope to bring him well aboard,  
Let him slip safe down by the firths to sea,  
Out under Leith by night-setting, and thence  
Take ship for France and serve there out of sight  
In the new wars.

QUEEN. Aye, in the new French wars—

You wist thereof too, madam, with good leave—  
A goodly bait to catch mine honour with  
And let me wake up with my name bit through.  
I had been much bounden to you twain, methinks,  
But for my knight's sake and his love's; by God,  
He shall not die in God's despite nor mine.  
Call in our chief lords; bid one see to it:  
Aye, and make haste.

[*Exeunt MARY BEATON and MARY CARMICHAEL.*

Now shall I try their teeth:

I have done with fear; now nothing but pure love  
And power and pity shall have part in me;  
I will not throw them such a spirit in flesh  
To make their prey on. Though he be mad indeed,  
It is the goodliest madness ever smote  
Upon man's heart. A kingly knight—in faith,  
Meseems my face can yet make faith in men  
And break their brains with beauty: for a word,  
An eyelid's twitch, an eye's turn, tie them fast  
And make their souls cleave to me. God be thanked,  
This air has not yet curdled all the blood  
That went to make me fair. An hour ago,  
I thought I had been forgotten of men's love  
More than dead women's faces are forgot  
Of after lovers. All men are not of earth:  
For all the frost of fools and this cold land  
There be some yet catch fever of my face  
And burning for mine eyes' sake. I did think  
My time was gone when men would dance to death  
As to a music, and lie laughing down  
In the grave and take their funerals for their feasts,  
To get one kiss of me. I have some strength yet,

Though I lack power on men that lack men's blood.  
Yea, and God wot I will be merciful;  
For all the foolish hardness round my heart  
That tender women miss of to their praise,  
They shall not say but I had grace to give  
Even for love's sake. Why, let them take their way:  
What ails it them though I be soft or hard?  
Soft hearts would weep and weep and let men die  
For very mercy and sweet-heartedness;  
I that weep little for my pity's sake,  
I have the grace to save men. Let fame go—  
I care not much what shall become of fame,  
So I save love and do mine own soul right;  
I'll have my mercy help me to revenge  
On all the crew of them. How will he look,  
Having my pardon! I shall have sweet thanks  
And love of good men for my mercy's love—  
Yea, and be quit of these I hate to death,  
With one good deed.

*Enter the MARIES.*

MARY BEATON. Madam, the lords are here.

QUEEN. Stand you about me, I will speak to them.  
I would the whole world stood up in my face  
And heard what I shall say. Bid them come in.

*Enter MURRAY, RANDOLPH, MORTON, LINDSAY, and  
other Lords.*

Hear you, fair lords, I have a word to you;  
There is one thing I would fain understand—  
If I be queen or no; for by my life  
Methinks I am growing unqueenly. No man speak?  
Pray you take note, sweet lord ambassador,  
I am no queen: I never was born queen;

Alack, that one should fool us in this wise!  
Take up my crown, sir, I will none of it  
Till it hath bells on as a fool's cap hath.  
Nay, who will have it? no man take it up?  
Was there none worthy to be shamed but I?  
Here are enow good faces, good to crown;  
Will you be king, fair brother? or you, my lord?  
Give me a spinner's curch, a wisp of reed,  
Any mean thing; but, God's love, no more gold,  
And no more shame: let boys throw dice for it,  
Or cast it to the grooms for tennis-play,  
For I will none.

MURRAY. . What would your highness have?

QUEEN. Yea, yea, I said I was no majesty;  
I shall be shortly fallen out of grace.  
What would I have? I would have leave to live;  
Perchance I shall not shortly: nay, for me  
That have no leave to respite other lives  
To keep mine own life were small praise enow.

MURRAY. Your majesty hath power to respite men,  
As we well wot; no man saith otherwise.

QUEEN. What, is this true? 'tis a thing wonderful—  
So great I cannot be well sure of it.  
Strange that a queen should find such grace as this  
At such lords' hands as ye be, such great lords:  
I pray you let me get assured again,  
Lest I take jest for truth and shame myself  
And make you mirth: to make your mirth of me,  
God wot it were small pains to you, my lords,  
But much less honour. I may send reprieve—  
With your sweet leaves I may?

MURRAY.

Assuredly.

QUEEN. Lo, now, what grace is this I have of you!  
I had a will to respite Chastelard,  
And would not do it for very fear of you:  
Look you, I wist not ye were merciful.

MORTON. Madam—

QUEEN. My lord, you have a word to me?  
Doth it displease you such a man should live?

MORTON. 'Twere a mad mercy in your majesty  
To lay no hand upon his second fault  
And let him thrice offend you.

QUEEN. Aye, my lord?

MORTON. It were well done to muffle lewd men's  
mouths

By casting of his head into their laps:  
It were much best.

QUEEN. Yea, truly were it so?  
But if I will not, yet I will not, sir,  
For all the mouths in Scotland. Now, by heaven,  
As I am pleased he shall not die, but live,  
So shall ye be. There is no man shall die,  
Except it please me; and no man shall say,  
Except it please me, if I do ill or well.  
Which of you now will set his will to mine?  
Not you, nor you I think, nor none of you,  
Nor no man living that loves living well.  
Let one stand forth and smite me with his hand,  
Wring my crown off and cast it underfoot,  
And he shall get my respite back of me,  
And no man else: he shall bid live or die.  
And no man else; and he shall be my lord,  
And no man else. What, will not one be king?  
Will not one here lay hold upon my state?



I am queen of you for all things come and gone.  
Nay, my chief lady, and no meaner one,  
The chiefest of my maidens, shall bear this  
And give it to my prisoner for a grace;  
Who shall deny me? who shall do me wrong?  
Bear greeting to the lord of Chastelard,  
And this withal for respite of his life,  
For by my head he shall die no such way:  
Nay, sweet, no words, but hence and back again.

[*Exit* MARY BEATON.]

Farewell, dear lords; ye have shown grace to me,  
And some time I will thank you as I may;  
Till when think well of me and what is done.

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

## ACT V.

### CHASTELARD.

SCENE I.—*Before Holyrood. A crowd of people; among them Soldiers, Burgesses, a Preacher, &c.*

1ST CITIZEN. They are not out yet. Have you seen the man?

What manner of man?

2ND CITIZEN. Shall he be hanged or no?

There was a fellow hanged some three days gone  
Wept the whole way: think you this man shall die  
In better sort, now?

1ST CITIZEN. Eh, these shawm-players  
That walk before strange women and make songs!  
How should they die well?

3RD CITIZEN. Is it sooth men say  
Our dame was wont to kiss him on the face  
In lewd folk's sight?

1ST CITIZEN. Yea, saith one, all day long  
He used to sit and jangle words in rhyme  
To suit with shakes of faint adulterous sound  
Some French lust in men's ears; she made songs too,  
Soft things to feed sin's amorous mouth upon—  
Delicate sounds for dancing at in hell.

4TH CITIZEN. Is it priest Black that he shall have  
by him  
When they do come?

3RD CITIZEN. Ah! by God's leave, not so;  
If the knave show us his peeled onion's head  
And that damned flagging jowl of his—

2ND CITIZEN. Nay, sirs,  
Take heed of words; moreover, please it you,  
This man hath no pope's part in him.

3RD CITIZEN. I say  
That if priest whore's-friend with the lewd thief's cheek  
Show his foul blinking face to shame all ours,  
It goes back fouler; well, one day hell's fire  
Will burn him black indeed.

A WOMAN. What kind of man?  
'Tis yet great pity of him if he be  
Goodly enow for this queen's paramour.  
A French lord overseas? what doth he here,  
With Scotch folk here?

1ST CITIZEN. Fair mistress, I think well  
He doth so at some times that I were fain  
To do as well.

THE WOMAN. Nay, then he will not die.

1ST CITIZEN. Why, see you, if one eat a piece of  
bread

Baked as it were a certain prophet's way,  
Not upon coals, now—you shall apprehend—  
If defiled bread be given a man to eat,  
Being thrust into his mouth, why he shall eat,  
And with good hap shall eat; but if now, say,  
One steal this, bread and beastliness and all,  
When scarcely for pure hunger flesh and bone

Cleave one to other—why, if he steal to eat,  
Be it even the filthiest feeding—though the man  
Be famine-flayed of flesh and skin, I say  
He shall be hanged.

3RD CITIZEN. Nay, stolen said you, sir?  
See, God bade eat abominable bread,  
And freely was it eaten—for a sign  
This, for a sign—and doubtless as did God,  
So may the devil; bid one eat freely and live,  
Not for a sign.

2ND CITIZEN. Will you think thus of her?  
But wherefore should they get this fellow slain  
If he be clear toward her?

3RD CITIZEN. Sir, one must see  
The day comes when a woman sheds her sin  
As a bird moults; and she being shifted so,  
The old mate of her old feather pecks at her  
To get the right bird back; then she being stronger  
Picks out his eyes—eh?

2ND CITIZEN. Like enough to be;  
But if it be—Is not one preaching there  
With certain folk about him?

1ST CITIZEN. Yea, the same  
Who preached a month since from Ezekiel  
Concerning these twain—this our queen that is  
And her that was, and is not now so much  
As queen over hell's worm.

3RD CITIZEN. Aye, said he not,  
This was Aholah, the first one of these,  
Called sisters only for a type—being twain,  
Twain Maries, no whit Nazarene? the first  
Bred out of Egypt like the water-worm

With sides in wet green places baked with slime  
And festered flesh that steams against the sun;  
A plague among all people, and a type  
Set as a flake upon a leper's fell.

1ST CITIZEN. Yea, said he, and unto her the men  
went in,

The men of Pharaoh's, beautiful with red  
And with red gold, fair foreign-footed men,  
The bountiful fair men, the courteous men,  
The delicate men with delicate feet, that went  
Curling their small beards Agag-fashion, yea  
Pruning their mouths to nibble words behind  
With pecking at God's skirts—small broken oaths  
Fretted to shreds between most dainty lips,  
And underbreath some praise of Ashtaroth  
Sighed laughingly.

2ND CITIZEN. Was he not under guard  
For the good word?

1ST CITIZEN. Yea, but now forth again—  
And of the latter said he—there being two,  
The first Aholah, which interpreted—

3RD CITIZEN. But, of this latter?

1ST CITIZEN. Well, of her he said  
How she made letters for Chaldean folk  
And men that came forth of the wilderness  
And all her sister's chosen men; yea, she  
Kept not her lip from any sin of hers  
But multiplied in whoredoms toward all these  
That hate God mightily; for these, he saith,  
These are the fair French people, and these her kin  
Sought out of England with her love-letters  
To bring them to her kiss of love; and thus

With a prayer made that God would break such love  
Ended some while; then crying out for strong wrath  
Spake with a great voice after: This is she,  
Yea the lewd woman, yea the same woman  
That gat bruised breasts in Egypt, when strange men  
Swart from great suns, foot-burnt with angry soils  
And strewn with sand of gaunt Chaldean miles,  
Poured all their love upon her: she shall drink  
The Lord's cup of derision that is filled  
With drunkenness and sorrow, great of sides  
And deep to drink in till the dreg drips out:  
Yea, and herself with the twain shards thereof  
Pluck off her breasts; so said he.

4TH CITIZEN.

See that stir—

Are not they come?

3RD CITIZEN.

There wants an hour of them.

Draw near and let us hearken; he will speak  
Surely some word of this.

2ND CITIZEN.

What saith he now?

THE PREACHER. The mercy of a harlot is a sword  
And her mouth sharper than a flame of fire.

## SCENE II.—*In Prison.*

CHASTELARD. So here my time shuts up; and the  
last light  
Has made the last shade in the world for me.  
The sunbeam that was narrow like a leaf  
Has turned a hand, and the hand stretched to an arm,  
And the arm has reached the dust on the floor, and  
made

A maze of motes with paddling fingers. Well,  
I knew not that a man so sure to die  
Could care so little; a bride-night's lustiness  
Leaps in my veins as light fire under a wind:  
As if I felt a kindling beyond death  
Of some new joys far outside of me yet;  
Sweet sound, sweet smell and touch of things far out  
Sure to come soon. I wonder will death be  
Even all it seems now? or the talk of hell  
And wretched changes of the worn-out soul  
Nailed to decaying flesh, shall that be true?  
Or is this like the forethought of deep sleep  
Felt by a tired man? Sleep were good enough—  
Shall sleep be all? But I shall not forget  
For any sleep this love bound upon me—  
For any sleep or quiet ways of death.  
Ah, in my weary dusty space of sight  
Her face will float with heavy scents of hair  
And fire of subtle amorous eyes, and lips  
More hot than wine, full of sweet wicked words  
Babbled against mine own lips, and long hands  
Spread out, and pale bright throat and pale bright  
breasts,  
Fit to make all men mad. I do believe  
This fire shall never quite burn out to the ash  
And leave no heat and flame upon my dust  
For witness where a man's heart was burnt up.  
For all Christ's work this Venus is not quelled,  
But reddens at the mouth with blood of men,  
Sucking between small teeth the sap o' the veins,  
Dabbling with death her little tender lips—  
*A bitter beauty, poisonous-pearled mouth.*

I am not fit to live but for love's sake,  
So I were best die shortly. Ah, fair love,  
Fair fearful Venus made of deadly foam,  
I shall escape you somehow with my death—  
Your splendid supple body and mouth on fire  
And Paphian breath that bites the lips with heat.  
I had best die.

*Enter MARY BEATON.*

What, is my death's time come,  
And you the friend to make death kind to me?  
'Tis sweetly done; for I was sick for this.

MARY BEATON. Nay, but see here; nay, for you  
shall not die:  
She has reprieved you; look, her name to that,  
A present respite; I was sure of her:  
You are quite safe: here, take it in your hands:  
I am faint with the end of pain. Read there.

CHASTELARD. Reprieve?  
Wherefore reprieve? Who has done this to me?

MARY BEATON. I never feared but God would have  
you live,  
Or I knew well God must have punished me;  
But I feared nothing, had no sort of fear.  
What makes you stare upon the seal so hard?  
Will you not read now?

CHASTELARD. A reprieve of life—  
Reprieving me from living. Nay, by God,  
I count one death a bitter thing enough.

MARY BEATON. See what she writes; your love; for  
love of you;  
Out of her love; a word to save your life:



But I knew this too though you love me not:  
She is your love; I knew that: yea, by heaven.

CHASTELARD. You knew I had to live and be re-  
prieved:  
Say I were bent to die now?

MARY BEATON. Do not die,  
For her sweet love's sake; not for pity of me,  
You would not bear with life for me one hour;  
But for hers only.

CHASTELARD. Nay, I love you well,  
I would not hurt you for more lives than one.  
But for this fair-faced paper of reprieve,  
We'll have no riddling to make death shift sides:  
Look, here ends one of us. [*Tearing it.*]

For her I love,  
She will not anger heaven with slaying me;  
For me, I am well quit of loving her;  
For you, I pray you be well comforted.  
Seeing in my life no man gat good by me  
And by my death no hurt is any man's.

MARY BEATON. And I that loved you? nay, I loved  
you; nay,  
Why should your like be pitied when they love?  
Her hard heart is not yet so hard as yours,  
Nor God's hard heart. I care not if you die.  
These bitter madmen are not fit to live.  
I will not have you touch me, speak to me,  
Not take farewell of you. See you die well,  
Or death will play with shame for you, and win,  
And laugh you out of life. I am right glad  
*I never am to see you any more,*

For I should come to hate you easily;  
I would not have you live.

[*Exit.*

CHASTELARD.                      She has cause enow.

I would this wretched waiting had an end,  
For I wax feeble than I was: God knows  
I had a mind once to have saved this flesh  
And made life one with shame. It marvels me  
This girl that loves me should desire so much  
To have me sleep with shame for bedfellow  
A whole life's space; she would be glad to die  
To escape such life. It may be too her love  
Is but an amorous quarrel with herself,  
Not love of me but her own wilful soul;  
Then she will live and be more glad of this  
Than girls of their own will and their heart's love  
Before love mars them: so God go with her!  
For mine own love—I wonder will she come  
Sad at her mouth a little, with drawn cheeks  
And eyelids wrinkled up? or hot and quick  
To lean her head on mine and leave her lips  
Deep in my neck? For surely she must come;  
And I should fare the better to be sure  
What she will do. But as it please my sweet;  
For some sweet thing she must do if she come,  
Seeing how I have to die. Now three years since  
This had not seemed so good an end for me;  
But in some wise all things wear round betimes  
And wind up well. Yet doubtless she might take  
A will to come my way and hold my hands  
And kiss me some three kisses, throat, mouth, eyes,  
And say some soft three words to soften death:  
I do not see how this should break her ease.

Nay, she will come to get her warrant back:  
By this no doubt she is sorely penitent,  
Her fit of angry mercy well blown out  
And her wits cool again. She must have chafed  
A great while through for anger to become  
So like pure pity; they must have fretted her  
Nigh mad for anger: or it may be mistrust,  
She is so false; yea, to my death I think  
She will not trust me; alas the hard sweet heart!  
As if my lips could hurt her any way  
But by too keenly kissing of her own.  
Ah false poor sweet fair lips that keep no faith,  
They shall not catch mine false or dangerous;  
They must needs kiss me one good time, albeit  
They love me not at all. Lo, here she comes,  
For the blood leaps and catches at my face;  
There go her feet and tread upon my heart;  
Now shall I see what way I am to die.

*Enter the QUEEN.*

QUEEN. What, is one here? Speak to me for  
God's sake:  
Where are you lain?

CHASTELARD. Here, madam, at your hand.

QUEEN. Sweet lord, what sore pain have I had for  
you

And been most patient!—Nay, you are not bound.  
If you be gentle to me, take my hand.  
Do you not hold me the worst heart in the world?  
Nay, you must needs; but say not yet you do.  
I am worn so weak I know not how I live:  
Reach me your hand.

CHASTELARD. Take comfort and good heart;

All will find end; this is some grief to you,  
But you shall overlive it. Come, fair love;  
Be of fair cheer; I say you have done no wrong.

QUEEN. I will not be of cheer: I have done a thing  
That will turn fire and burn me. Tell me not;  
If you will do me comfort, whet your sword.  
But if you hate me, tell me of soft things,  
For I hate these, and bitterly. Look up;  
Am I not mortal to be gazed upon?

CHASTELARD. Yes, mortal, and not hateful.

QUEEN. O lost heart!

Give me some mean to die by.

CHASTELARD. Sweet, enough.

You have made no fault; life is not worth a world  
That you should weep to take it: would mine were,  
And I might give you a world-worthier gift  
Than one poor head that love has made a spoil;  
Take it for jest, and weep not: let me go.  
And think I died of chance or malady.  
Nay, I die well; one dies not best abed.

QUEEN. My warrant to reprieve you—that you  
saw?

That came between your hands?

CHASTELARD. Yea, not long since.

It seems you have no will to let me die.

QUEEN. Alas, you know I wrote it with my heart,  
Out of pure love; and since you were in bonds  
I have had such grief for love's sake and my heart's—  
Yea, by my life I have—I could not choose  
But give love way a little. Take my hand;  
You know it would have pricked my heart's blood out  
To write reprieve with.

CHASTELARD. Sweet, your hands are kind;  
Lay them about my neck, upon my face,  
And tell me not of writing.

QUEEN. Nay, by heaven,  
I would have given you mine own blood to drink  
If that could heal you of your soul-sickness.  
Yea, they know that, they curse me for your sake,  
Rail at my love—would God their heads were lopped  
And we twain left together this side death!  
But look you, sweet, if this my warrant hold  
You are but dead and shamed; for you must die,  
And they will slay you shamefully by force  
Even in my sight.

CHASTELARD. Faith, I think so they will.

QUEEN. Nay, they would slay me too, cast stones  
at me,  
Drag me alive—they have eaten poisonous words,  
They are mad and have no shame.

CHASTELARD. Aye, like enough.

QUEEN. Would God my heart were greater; but  
God wot

I have no heart to bear with fear and die.  
Yea, and I cannot help you: or I know  
I should be nobler, bear a better heart:  
But as this stands—I pray you for good love,  
As you hold honour a costlier thing than life—

CHASTELARD. Well?

QUEEN. Nay, I would not be denied  
for shame;

In brief, I pray you give me that again.

CHASTELARD. What, my reprieve?

QUEEN. Even so; deny me not,

For your sake mainly: yea, by God you know  
How fain I were to die in your death's stead.  
For your name's sake. This were no need to swear.  
Lest we be mocked to death with a reprieve,  
And so both die, being shamed. What, shall I swear?  
What, if I kiss you? must I pluck it out?  
You do not love me: no, nor honour. Come,  
I know you have it about you: give it me.

CHASTELARD. I cannot yield you such a thing again;  
Not as I had it.

QUEEN. A coward? what shift now?  
Do such men make such cravens?

CHASTELARD. Chide me not:  
Pity me that I cannot help my heart.

QUEEN. Heaven mend mine eyes that took you for  
a man!

What, is it sewn into your flesh? take heed—  
Nay, but for shame—what have you done with it?

CHASTELARD. Why, there it lies, torn up.

QUEEN. God help me, sir!  
Have you done this?

CHASTELARD. Yea, sweet; what should I do?  
Did I not know you to the bone, my sweet?  
God speed you well! you have a goodly lord.

QUEEN. My love, sweet love, you are more fair  
than he,

Yea, fairer many times: I love you much,  
Sir, know you that?

CHASTELARD. I think I know that well.  
Sit here a little till I feel you through  
In all my breath and blood for some sweet while  
O gracious body that mine arms have had,

And hair my face has felt on it! grave eyes  
And low thick lids that keep since years ago  
In the blue sweet of each particular vein  
Some special print of me! I am right glad  
That I must never feel a bitterer thing  
Than your soft curled-up shoulder and amorous arms  
From this time forth; nothing can hap to me  
Less good than this for all my whole life through.  
I would not have some new pain after this  
Come spoil the savour. O, your round bird's throat,  
More soft than sleep or singing; your calm cheeks,  
Turned bright, turned wan with kisses hard and hot;  
The beautiful colour of your deep curved hands,  
Made of a red rose that had changed to white;  
That mouth mine own holds half the sweetness of,  
Yea, my heart holds the sweetness of it, whence  
My life began in me; mine that ends here  
Because you have no mercy, nay you know  
You never could have mercy. My fair love,  
Kiss me again, God loves you not the less;  
Why should one woman have all goodly things?  
You have all beauty; let mean women's lips  
Be pitiful, and speak truth: they will not be  
Such perfect things as yours. Be not ashamed  
That hands not made like these that snare men's souls  
Should do men good, give alms, relieve men's pain;  
You have the better, being more fair than they,  
They are half foul, being rather good than fair;  
You are quite fair: to be quite fair is best.  
Why, two nights hence I dreamed that I could see  
In through your bosom under the left flower,  
And there was a round hollow, and at heart

A little red snake sitting, without spot,  
That bit—like this, and sucked up sweet—like this,  
And curled its lithe light body right and left,  
And quivered like a woman in act to love.  
Then there was some low fluttered talk i' the lips,  
Faint sound of soft fierce words caressing them—  
Like a fair woman's when her love gets way.  
Ah, your old kiss—I know the ways of it:  
Let the lips cling a little. Take them off,  
And speak some word or I go mad with love.

QUEEN. Will you not have my chaplain come to you?

CHASTELARD. Some better thing of yours—some  
handkerchief,

Some fringe of scarf to make confession to—  
You had some book about you that fell out—

QUEEN. A little written book of Ronsard's rhymes,  
His gift, I wear in there for love of him—  
See, here between our feet.

CHASTELARD. Aye, my old lord's—

The sweet chief poet, my dear friend long since?  
Give me the book. Lo you, this verse of his:

*With coming lilies in late April came  
Her body, fashioned whiter for their shame;  
And roses, touched with blood since Adon bled,  
From her fair colour filled their lips with red:*  
A goodly praise: I could not praise you so.  
I read that while your marriage-feast went on.  
Leave me this book, I pray you: I would read  
The hymn of death here over ere I die;  
I shall know soon how much he knew of death  
When that was written. One thing I know now,  
I shall not die with half a heart at least.



Nor shift my face, nor weep my fault alive,  
Nor swear if I might live and do new deeds  
I would do better. Let me keep the book.

QUEEN. Yea, keep it: as would God you had kept  
your life

Out of mine eyes and hands. I am wrung to the heart:  
This hour feels dry and bitter in my mouth,  
As if its sorrow were my body's food  
More than my soul's. There are bad thoughts in me—  
Most bitter fancies biting me 'like birds  
That tear each other. Suppose you need not die?

CHASTELARD. You know I cannot live for two hours  
more.

Our fate was made thus ere our days were made:  
Will you fight fortune for so small a grief?  
But for one thing I were full fain of death.

QUEEN. What thing is that?

CHASTELARD. None need to name the thing.

Why, what can death do with me fit to fear?  
For if I sleep I shall not weep awake;  
Or if their saying be true of things to come,  
Though hell be sharp, in the worst ache of it  
I shall be eased so God will give me back  
Sometimes one golden gracious sight of you—  
The aureole woven flowerlike through your hair,  
And in your lips the little laugh as red  
As when it came upon a kiss and ceased,  
Touching my mouth.

QUEEN.

As I do now, this way,  
With my heart after: would I could shed tears,  
Tears should not fail when the heart shudders so.  
*But your bad thought?*

CHASTELARD. Well, such a thought as this:  
It may be, long time after I am dead,  
For all you are, you may see bitter days;  
God may forget you or be wroth with you:  
Then shall you lack a little help of me,  
And I shall feel your sorrow touching you,  
A happy sorrow, though I may not touch:  
I that would fain be turned to flesh again,  
Fain get back life to give up life for you,  
To shed my blood for help, that long ago  
You shed and were not holpen: and your heart  
Will ache for help and comfort, yea for love,  
And find less love than mine—for I do think  
You never will be loved thus in your life.

QUEEN. It may be man will never love me more;  
For I am sure I shall not love man twice.

CHASTELARD. I know not: men must love you in  
life's spite;  
For you will always kill them; man by man  
Your lips will bite them dead; yea, though you would,  
You shall not spare one; all will die of you;  
I cannot tell what love shall do with these,  
But I for all my love shall have no might  
To help you more, mine arms and hands no power  
To fasten on you more. This cleaves my heart,  
That they shall never touch your body more.  
But for your grief—you will not have to grieve;  
For being in such poor eyes so beautiful  
It must needs be as God is more than I  
So much more love he hath of you than mine;  
Yea, God shall not be bitter with my love,  
*Seeing she is so sweet.*

QUEEN. Ah my sweet fool,  
Think you when God will ruin me for sin  
My face of colour shall prevail so much  
With him, so often the toothed iron's edge  
To save my throat a scar? nay, I am sure  
I shall die somehow sadly.

CHASTELARD. This is pure grief;  
The shadow of your pity for my death,  
Mere foolishness of pity: all sweet moods  
Throw out such little shadows of themselves,  
Leave such light fears behind. You, die like me?  
Stretch your throat out that I may kiss all round  
Where mine shall be cut through: suppose my mouth  
The axe-edge to bite so sweet a throat in twain  
With bitter iron, should not it turn soft  
As lip is soft to lip?

QUEEN. I am quite sure  
I shall die sadly some day, Chastelard;  
I am quite certain.

CHASTELARD. Do not think such things;  
Lest all my next world's memories of you be  
As heavy as this thought.

QUEEN. I will not grieve you;  
Forgive me that my thoughts were sick with grief.  
What can I do to give you ease at heart?  
Shall I kiss now? I pray you have no fear  
But that I love you.

CHASTELARD. Turn your face to me;  
I do not grudge your face this death of mine;  
It is too fair—by God, you are too fair.  
What noise is that?

QUEEN. Can the hour be through so soon?

I bade them give me but a little hour.  
Ah! I do love you! such brief space for love!  
I am yours all through, do all your will with me;  
What if we lay and let them take us fast,  
Lips grasping lips? I dare do anything.

CHASTELARD. Show better cheer: let no man see  
you mazed;  
Make haste and kiss me; cover up your throat  
Lest one see tumbled lace and prate of it.

*Enter the Guard:* MURRAY, DARNLEY, MARY HAMILTON,  
MARY BEATON, *and others with them.*

DARNLEY. Sirs, do your charge; let him not have  
much time.

MARY HAMILTON. Peace, lest you chafe the queen:  
look, her brows bend.

CHASTELARD. Lords, and all you come hither for  
my sake,

If while my life was with me like a friend  
That I must now forget the friendship of,  
I have done a wrong to any man of you,  
As it may be by fault of mine I have;  
Of such an one I crave for courtesy  
He will now cast it from his mind and heed  
Like a dead thing; considering my dead fault  
Worth no remembrance further than my death.  
This for his gentle honour and goodwill  
I do beseech him, doubting not to find  
Such kindness if he be nobly made  
And of his birth a courteous race of man.  
You, my lord James, if you have aught toward me—  
Or you, Lord Darnley—I dare fear no jot,

Whate'er this be wherein you were aggrieved,  
But you will pardon all for gentleness.

DARNLEY. For my part—yea, well, if the thing  
stand thus,

As you must die—one would not bear folk hard—  
And if the rest shall hold it honourable,  
Why, I do pardon you.

MURRAY. Sir, in all things  
We find no cause to speak of you but well:  
For all I see, save this your deadly fault,  
I hold you for a noble perfect man.

CHASTELARD. I thank you, fair lord, for your nobleness.

You likewise, for the courtesy you have  
I give you thanks, sir; and to all these lords  
That have not heart to load me at my death.  
Last, I beseech of the best queen of men  
And royallest fair lady in the world  
To pardon me my grievous mortal sin  
Done in such great offence of her: for, sirs,  
If ever since I came between her eyes  
She hath beheld me other than I am  
Or shown her honour other than it is,  
Or, save in royal faultless courtesies,  
Used me with favour; if by speech or face,  
By salutation or by tender eyes,  
She hath made a way for my desire to live,  
Given ear to me or boldness to my breath;  
I pray God cast me forth before day cease  
Even to the heaviest place there is in hell.  
Yea, if she be not stainless toward all men,  
*I pray this axe that I shall die upon*

May cut me off body and soul from heaven.  
Now for my soul's sake I dare pray to you;  
Forgive me, madam.

QUEEN. Yea, I do, fair sir:  
With all my heart in all I pardon you.

CHASTELARD. God thank you for great mercies.

Lords, set hence;

I am right loth to hold your patience here;  
I must not hold much longer any man's.  
Bring me my way and bid me fare well forth.

*(As they pass out the QUEEN stays MARY BEATON).*

QUEEN. Hark hither, sweet. Get back to Holyrood  
And take Carmichael with you: go both up  
In some chief window whence the squares lie clear—  
Seem not to know what I shall do—mark that—  
And watch how things fare under. Have good cheer;  
You do not think now I can let him die?  
Nay, this were shameful madness if you did,  
And I should hate you.

MARY BEATON. Pray you love me, madam,  
And swear you love me and will let me live,  
That I may die the quicker.

QUEEN. Nay, sweet, see,  
Nay, you shall see, this must not seem devised;  
I will take any man with me, and go;  
Yea, for pure hate of them that hate him: yea,  
Lay hold upon the headsman and bid strike  
Here on my neck; if they will have him die,  
Why, I will die too: queens have died this way  
For less things than his love is. Nay, I know  
They want no blood; I will bring swords to boot.  
For dear love's rescue though half earth were slain;

*Chastelard and Mary Stuart.*

What should men do with blood? Stand fast at watch;  
For I will be his ransom if I die. [Exeunt.

SCENE III.—*The Upper Chamber in Holyrood.*

MARY BEATON *seated*: MARY CARMICHAEL *at  
a window.*

MARY BEATON. Do you see nothing?

MARY CARMICHAEL. Nay, but swarms of men  
And talking women gathered in small space,  
Flapping their gowns and gaping with fools' eyes:  
And a thin ring round one that seems to speak,  
Holding his hands out eagerly; no more.

MARY BEATON. Why, I hear more, I hear men shout  
*The queen.*

MARY CARMICHAEL. Nay, no cries yet.

MARY BEATON. Ah, they will cry out soon  
When she comes forth; they should cry out on her;  
I hear their crying in my heart. Nay, sweet,  
Do not you hate her? all men, if God please,  
Shall hate her one day; yea, one day no doubt  
I shall worse hate her.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Pray you, be at peace;  
You hurt yourself: she will be merciful;  
What, could you see a true man slain for you?  
I think I could not; it is not like our hearts  
To have such hard sides to them.

MARY BEATON. O, not you,  
And I could nowise; there's some blood in her  
*That does not run to mercy as ours doth:*

That fair face and the cursed heart in her  
Made keener than a knife for manslaying  
Can bear strange things.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Peace, for the people come.  
Ah—Murray, hooded over half his face  
With plucked-down hat, few folk about him, eyes  
Like a man angered; Darnley after him,  
Holding our Hamilton above her wrist,  
His mouth put near her hair to whisper with—  
And she laughs softly, looking at his feet.

MARY BEATON. She will not live long; God hath  
given her  
Few days and evil, full of hate and love,  
I see well now.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Hark, there's their cry—*The  
queen!*  
*Fair life and long, and good days to the queen!*

MARY BEATON. Yea, but God knows. I feel such  
patience here  
As I were sure in a brief while to die.

MARY CARMICHAEL. She bends and laughs a little,  
graciously,  
And turns half, talking to I know not whom—  
A big man with great shoulders; ah, the face,  
You get his face now—wide and duskish, yea  
The youth burnt out of it. A goodly man,  
Thewed mightily and sunburnt to the bone;  
Doubtless he was away in banishment,  
Or kept some march far off.

MARY BEATON. Still you see nothing?

MARY CARMICHAEL. Yea, now they bring him forth  
with a great noise,



The folk all shouting and men thrust about  
Each way from him.

MARY BEATON. Ah, Lord God, bear with me,  
Help me to bear a little with my love  
For thine own love, or give me some quick death.  
Do not come down; I shall get strength again,  
Only my breath fails. Looks he sad or blithe?  
Not sad I doubt yet.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Nay, not sad a whit,  
But like a man who losing gold or lands  
Should lose a heavy sorrow; his face set,  
The eyes not curious to the right or left,  
And reading in a book, his hands unbound,  
With short fleet smiles. The whole place catches breath,  
Looking at him; she seems at point to speak:  
Now she lies back, and laughs, with her brows drawn  
And her lips drawn too. Now they read his crime—  
I see the laughter tightening her chin:  
Why do you bend your body and draw breath?  
They will not slay him in her sight; I am sure  
She will not have him slain.

MARY BEATON. Forth, and fear not:  
I was just praying to myself—one word,  
A prayer I have to say for her to God  
If he will mind it.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Now he looks her side;  
Something he says, if one could hear thus far:  
She leans out, lengthening her throat to hear  
And her eyes shining.

MARY BEATON. Ah, I had no hope:  
Yea thou God knowest that I had no hope.  
*Let it end quickly.*

MARY CARMICHAEL. Now his eyes are wide  
And his smile great; and like another smile  
The blood fills all his face. Her cheek and neck  
Work fast and hard; she must have pardoned him,  
He looks so merrily. Now he comes forth  
Out of that ring of people and kneels down;  
Ah, how the helve and edge of the great axe  
Turn in the sunlight as the man shifts hands—  
It must be for a show: because she sits  
And hardly moves her head this way—I see  
Her chin and lifted lips. Now she stands up,  
Puts out her hand, and they fall muttering;  
Ah!

MARY BEATON. It is done now?

MARY CARMICHAEL. For God's love, stay there;  
Do not look out. Nay, he is dead by this;  
But gather up yourself from off the floor;  
Will she die too? I shut mine eyes and heard—  
Sweet, do not beat your face upon the ground.  
Nay, he is dead and slain.

MARY BEATON. What, slain indeed?  
I knew he would be slain. Aye, through the neck:  
I knew one must be smitten through the neck  
To die so quick: if one were stabbed to the heart,  
He would die slower.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Will you behold him dead?

MARY BEATON. Yea: must a dead man not be looked  
upon  
That living one was fain of? give me way.  
Lo you, what sort of hair this fellow had;  
The doomsman gathers it into his hand.

To grasp the head by for all men to see;  
I never did that.

MARY CARMICHAEL. For God's love, let me go.

MARY BEATON. I think sometimes she must have  
held it so,

Holding his head back, see you, by the hair  
To kiss his face, still lying in his arms.

Aye, go and weep: it must be pitiful

If one could see it. What is this they say?

*So perish the queen's traitors!* Yea, but so

Perish the queen! God, do thus much to her

For his sake only: yea, for pity's sake

Do thus much with her.

MARY CARMICHAEL. Prithee come in with me:  
Nay, come at once.

MARY BEATON. If I should meet with her  
And spit upon her at her coming in——

But if I live then shall I see one day

When God will smite her lying harlot's mouth——

Surely I shall. Come, I will go with you;

We will sit down together face to face

Now, and keep silence; for this life is hard,

And the end of it is quietness at last.

Come, let us go: here is no word to say.

AN USHER. Make way there for the lord of Both-  
well; room——

Place for my lord of Bothwell next the queen.

EXPLICIT.

MARY STUART.

ἀντὶ μὲν ἐχθρᾶς γλώσσης ἐχθρὰ  
γλῶσσα τελείσθω· τοῦφειλόμενον  
πράσσουσα δίκη μέγ' ἄντεῖ  
ἀντὶ δὲ πληγῆς φονίας φονίαν  
πληγὴν τινέτω· δράσαντι παθεῖν,  
τριγέρων μῦθος τάδε φωνεῖ.

ÆSCH. Cho. 309-315.

I DEDICATE THIS PLAY,  
NO LONGER, AS THE FIRST PART OF THE TRILOGY  
WHICH IT COMPLETES WAS DEDICATED,  
TO THE GREATEST EXILE, BUT SIMPLY  
TO THE GREATEST MAN OF FRANCE:  
TO THE CHIEF OF LIVING POETS:  
TO THE FIRST DRAMATIST OF HIS AGE:  
TO MY BELOVED AND REVERED MASTER  
VICTOR HUGO.



## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MARY STUART.  
 MARY BEATON.  
 QUEEN ELIZABETH.  
 BARBARA MOWBRAY.  
 LORD BURGHEY.  
 SIR FRANCIS WALSINGHAM.  
 WILLIAM DAVISON.  
 ROBERT DUDLEY, *Earl of Leicester.*  
 GEORGE TALBOT, *Earl of Shrewsbury.*  
 EARL OF KENT.  
 HENRY CAREY, *Lord Hunsdon.*  
 SIR CHRISTOPHER HATTON.  
 SIR THOMAS BROMLEY, *Lord Chancellor.*  
 POPHAM, *Attorney-General.*  
 EGERTON, *Solicitor-General.*  
 GAWDY, *the Queen's Sergeant.*  
 SIR AMYAS PAULET.  
 SIR DREW DRURY.

SIR THOMAS GORGES.  
 SIR WILLIAM WADE.  
 SIR ANDREW MELVILLE.  
 ROBERT BEALE, *Clerk of the Council.*  
 CURLE and NAU, *Secretaries to the Queen of Scots.*  
 GORION, *her Apothecary.*  
 FATHER JOHN BALLARD,  
 ANTHONY BABINGTON,  
 CHIDIOCK TICHBORNE,  
 JOHN SAVAGE,  
 CHARLES TILNEY,  
 EDWARD ABINGTON,  
 THOMAS SALISBURY,  
 ROBERT BARNWELL,  
 THOMAS PHILLIPPS, *Secretary to Walsingham.*  
 M. DE CHÂTEAUNEUF.  
 M. DE BELLÈVRE.

} *Conspirators.*

*Commissioners, Privy Councillors, Sheriffs, Citizens, Officers,  
and Attendants.*

*Time.*—FROM AUGUST 14, 1586, TO FEBRUARY 18, 1587.





ACT I.  
ANTHONY BABINGTON.

SCENE I.—*Babington's Lodging: a veiled picture on the wall.*

*Enter* BABINGTON, TICHBORNE, TILNEY, ABINGTON,  
SALISBURY, *and* BARNWELL.

BABINGTON. Welcome, good friends, and welcome  
this good day  
That casts out hope and brings in certainty  
To turn raw spring to summer. Now not long  
The flower that crowns the front of all our faiths  
Shall bleach to death in prison; now the trust  
That took the night with fire as of a star  
Grows red and broad as sunrise in our sight  
Who held it dear and desperate once, now sure,  
But not more dear, being surer. In my hand  
I hold this England and her brood, and all  
That time out of the chance of all her fate  
Makes hopeful or makes fearful: days and years,  
Triumphs and changes bred for praise or shame  
From the unborn womb of these unknown, are ours  
That stand yet noteless here; ours even as God's  
Who puts them in our hand as his, to wield

And shape to service godlike. None of you  
But this day strikes out of the scroll of death  
And writes apart immortal; what we would,  
That have we; what our fathers, brethren, peers,  
Bled and beheld not, died and might not win,  
That may we see, touch, handle, hold it fast,  
May take to bind our brows with. By my life,  
I think none ever had such hap alive  
As ours upon whose plighted lives are set  
The whole good hap and evil of the state  
And of the Church of God and world of men  
And fortune of all crowns and creeds that hang  
Now on the creed and crown of this our land,  
To bring forth fruit to our resolve, and bear  
What sons to time it please us; whose mere will  
Is father of the future.

TILNEY.

Have you said?

BABINGTON. I cannot say too much of so much good.

TILNEY. Say nothing then a little, and hear one while:

Your talk struts high and swaggers loud for joy,  
And safely may perchance, or may not, here;  
But why to-day we know not.

BABINGTON.

No, I swear,

Ye know not yet, no man of us but one,  
No man on earth; one woman knows, and I,  
I that best know her the best begot of man  
And noblest; no king born so kingly-souled,  
Nor served of such brave servants.

TICHBORNE.

What, as we?

BABINGTON. Is there one vein in one of all our hearts  
That is not blown aflame as fire with air  
*With even the thought to serve her? and, by God,*

They that would serve had need be bolder found  
Than common kings find servants.

SALISBURY.

Well, your cause?

What need or hope has this day's heat brought forth  
To blow such fire up in you?

BABINGTON.

Hark you, sirs;

The time is come, ere I shall speak of this,  
To set again the seal on our past oaths  
And bind their trothplight faster than it is  
With one more witness; not for shameful doubt,  
But love and perfect honour. Gentlemen,  
Whose souls are brethren sealed and sworn to mine,  
Friends that have taken on your hearts and hands  
The selfsame work and weight of deed as I,  
Look on this picture; from its face to-day  
Thus I pluck off the muffled mask, and bare  
Its likeness and our purpose. Aye, look here;  
None of these faces but are friends of each,  
None of these lips unsworn to all the rest,  
None of these hands unplighted. Know ye not  
What these have bound their souls to? and myself,  
I that stand midmost painted here of all,  
Have I not right to wear of all this ring  
The topmost flower of danger? Who but I  
Should crown and close this goodly circle up  
Of friends I call my followers? There ye stand,  
Fashioned all five in likeness of mere life,  
Just your own shapes, even all the man but speech,  
As in a speckless mirror; Tichborne, thou,  
My nearest heart and brother next in deed,  
Then Abington, there Salisbury, Tilney there,  
And Barnwell, with the brave bright Irish eye

That burns with red remembrance of the blood  
Seen drenching those green fields turned brown and grey  
Where fire can burn not faith out, nor the sword  
That hews the boughs off lop the root there set  
To spread in spite of axes. Friends, take heed;  
These are not met for nothing here in show  
Nor for poor pride set forth and boastful heart  
To make dumb brag of the undone deed, and wear  
The ghost and mockery of a crown unearned  
Before their hands have wrought it for their heads  
Out of a golden danger, glorious doubt,  
An act incomparable, by all time's mouths  
To be more blessed and cursed than all deeds done  
In this swift fiery world of ours, that drives  
On such hot wheels toward evil goals or good,  
And desperate each as other; but that each,  
Seeing here himself and knowing why here, may set  
His whole heart's might on the instant work, and hence  
Pass as a man rechristened, bathed anew  
And swordlike tempered from the touch that turns  
Dull iron to the two-edged fang of steel  
Made keen as fire by water; so, I say,  
Let this dead likeness of you wrought with hands  
Whereof ye wist not, working for mine end  
Even as ye gave them work, unwittingly,  
Quicken with life your vows and purposes  
To rid the beast that troubles all the world  
Out of men's sight and God's. Are ye not sworn  
Or stand not ready girt at perilous need  
To strike under the cloth of state itself  
The very heart we hunt for?

TICHBORNE.

Let not then

Too high a noise of hound and horn give note  
 How hot the hunt is on it, and ere we shoot  
 Startle the royal quarry; lest your cry  
 Give tongue too loud on such a trail, and we  
 More piteously be rent of our own hounds  
 Than he that went forth huntsman too, and came  
 To play the hart he hunted.

BABINGTON.                   Aye, but, see,  
 Your apish poet's-likeness holds not here,  
 If he that fed his hounds on his changed flesh  
 Was charmed out of a man and bayed to death  
 But through pure anger of a perfect maid;  
 For she that should of huntsmen turn us harts  
 Is Dian but in mouths of her own knaves,  
 And in paid eyes hath only godhead on  
 And light to dazzle none but them to death.  
 Yet I durst well abide her, and proclaim  
 As goddess-like as maiden.

BARNWELL.                   Why, myself  
 Was late at court in presence, and her eyes  
 Fixed somehow on me full in face; yet, 'faith,  
 I felt for that no lightning in my blood  
 Nor blast in mine as of the sun at noon  
 To blind their balls with godhead; no, ye see,  
 I walk yet well enough.

ABINGTON.                   She gazed at you?

BARNWELL.   Yes, 'faith; yea, surely; take a Puritan  
 oath

To seal my faith for Catholic. What, God help,  
 Are not mine eyes yet whole then? am I blind  
 Or maimed or scorched, and know not? by my head,

I find it sit yet none the worse for fear  
To be so thunder-blasted.

ABINGTON.

Hear you, sirs?

TICHBORNE. I was not fain to hear it.

BARNWELL.

Which was he

Spake of one changed into a hart? by God,  
There be some hearts here need no charm, I think,  
To turn them hares of hunters; or if deer,  
Not harts but hinds, and rascal.

BABINGTON.

Peace, man, peace!

Let not at least this noble cry of hounds  
Flash fangs against each other. See what verse  
I bade write under on the picture here:  
*These are my comrades, whom the peril's self  
Draws to it;* how say you? will not all in the end  
Prove fellows to me? how should one fall off  
Whom danger lures and scares not? Tush, take hands;  
It was to keep them fast in all time's sight  
I bade my painter set you here, and me  
Your loving captain; gave him sight of each  
And order of us all in amity.  
And if this yet not shame you, or your hearts  
Be set as boys' on wrangling, yet, behold,  
I pluck as from my heart this witness forth

[*Taking out a letter.*]

To what a work we are bound to, even her hand  
Whom we must bring from bondage, and again  
Be brought of her to honour. This is she,  
Mary the queen, sealed of herself and signed  
As mine assured good friend for ever. Now,  
Am I more worth or Ballard?

TILNEY.

He it was

Bade get her hand and seal to allow of all  
That should be practised; he is wise.

BABINGTON.

Aye, wise!

He was in peril too, he said, God wot,  
And must have surety of her, he; but I,  
'Tis I that have it, and her heart and trust,  
See all here else, her trust and her good love  
Who knows mine own heart of mine own hand writ  
And sent her for assurance.

SALISBURY.

This we know;

What we would yet have certified of you  
Is her own heart sent back, you say, for yours.

BABINGTON. I say? not I, but proof says here, cries out  
Her perfect will and purpose. Look you, first  
She writes me what good comfort hath she had  
To know by letter mine estate, and thus  
Reknit the bond of our intelligence,  
As grief was hers to live without the same  
This great while past; then lovingly commends  
In me her own desire to avert betimes  
Our enemies' counsel to root out our faith  
With ruin of us all; for so she hath shown  
All Catholic princes what long since they have wrought  
Against the king of Spain; and all this while  
The Catholics naked here to all misuse  
Fall off in numbered force, in means and power,  
And if we look not to it shall soon lack strength  
To rise and take that hope or help by the hand  
Which time shall offer them; and see for this  
What heart is hers! she bids you know of me  
Though she were no part of this cause, who holds  
Worthless her own weighed with the general weal,



She will be still most willing to this end  
To employ therein her life and all she hath  
Or in this world may look for.

TICHBORNE.                      This rings well;  
But by what present mean prepared doth hers  
Confirm your counsel? or what way set forth  
So to prevent our enemies with good speed  
That at the goal we find them not, and there  
Fall as men broken?

BABINGTON.                      Nay, what think you, man,  
Or what esteem of her, that hope should lack  
Herein her counsel? hath she not been found  
Most wary still, clear-spirited, bright of wit,  
Keen as a sword's edge, as a bird's eye swift,  
Man-hearted ever? First, for crown and base  
Of all this enterprise, she bids me here  
Examine with good heed of good event  
What power of horse and foot among us all  
We may well muster, and in every shire  
Choose out what captain for them, if we lack  
For the main host a general;—as indeed  
Myself being bound to bring her out of bonds  
Or here with you cut off the heretic queen  
Could take not this on me;—what havens, towns,  
What ports to north and west and south, may we  
Assure ourselves to hold in certain hand  
For entrance and receipt of help from France,  
From Spain, or the Low Countries; in what place  
Draw our main head together; for how long  
Raise for this threefold force of foreign friends  
Wage and munition, or what harbours choose  
*For these to land; or what provision crave*



Of coin at need or armour; by what means  
The six her friends deliberate to proceed;  
And last the manner how to get her forth  
From this last hold wherein she newly lies:  
These heads hath she set down, and bids me take  
Of all seven points counsel and common care  
With as few friends as may be of the chief  
Ranged on our part for actors; and thereon  
Of all devised with diligent speed despatch  
Word to the ambassador of Spain in France,  
Who to the experience past of all the estate  
Here on this side aforetime that he hath  
Shall join goodwill to serve us.

TILNEY.

Aye, no more?

Of us no more I mean, who being most near  
To the English queen our natural mistress born  
Take on our hands, her household pensioners',  
The stain and chiefest peril of her blood  
Shed by close violence under trust; no word,  
No care shown further of our enterprise  
That flowers to fruit for her sake?

BABINGTON.

Fear not that;

Abide till we draw thither—aye—she bids  
Get first assurance of such help to come,  
And take thereafter, what before were vain,  
Swift order to provide arms, horses, coin,  
Wherewith to march at word from every shire  
Given by the chief; and save these principals  
Let no man's knowledge less in place partake  
The privy ground we move on, but set forth  
For entertainment of the meaner ear  
We do but fortify us against the plot

Laid of the Puritan part in all this realm  
That have their general force now drawn to head  
In the Low Countries, whence being home returned  
They think to spoil us utterly, and usurp  
Not from her only and all else lawful heirs  
The kingly power, but from their queen that is  
(As we may let the bruit fly forth disguised)  
Wrest that which now she hath, if she for fear  
Take not their yoke upon her, and therefrom  
Catch like infection from plague-tainted air  
The purulence of their purity; with which plea  
We so may stablish our confederacies  
As wrought but for defence of lands, lives, goods,  
From them that would cut off our faith and these;  
No word writ straight or given directly forth  
Against the queen, but rather showing our will  
Firm to maintain her and her lineal heirs,  
*Myself* (she saith) *not named*. Ha, gallant souls,  
Hath our queen's craft no savour of sweet wit,  
No brain to help her heart with?

TICHBORNE.

But our end—

No word of this yet?

BABINGTON.

And a good word, here,  
And worth our note, good friend; being thus prepared,  
Time then shall be to set our hands on work  
And straight thereon take order that she may  
Be suddenly transported out of guard,  
Not tarrying till our foreign force come in,  
Which then must make the hotter haste; and seeing  
We can make no day sure for our design  
*Nor certain hour appointed* when she might



Find other friends at hand on spur of the act  
To take her forth of prison, ye should have  
About you always, or in court at least,  
Scouts furnished well with horses of good speed  
To bear the tiding to her and them whose charge  
Shall be to bring her out of bonds, that these  
May be about her ere her keeper have word  
What deed is freshly done; in any case,  
Ere he can make him strong within the house  
Or bear her forth of it: and need it were  
By divers ways to send forth two or three  
That one may pass if one be stayed; nor this  
Should we forget, to assay in the hour of need  
To cut the common posts off; by this plot  
May we steer safe, and fall not miserably,  
As they that laboured heretofore herein,  
Through overhaste to stir upon this side  
Ere surety make us strong of strangers' aid.  
And if at first we bring her forth of bonds,  
Be well assured, she bids us—as I think  
She doubts not me that I should let this slip,  
Forget so main a matter—well assured  
To set her in the heart of some strong host,  
Or strength of some good hold, where she may stay  
Till we be mustered and the ally drawn in;  
For should the queen, being scatheless of us yet  
As we unready, fall upon her flight,  
The bird untimely fled from snare to snare  
Should find being caught again a narrower hold  
Whence she should fly forth never, if cause indeed  
Should seem not given to use her worse; and we  
Should be with all extremity pursued,

To her most grief; for this should grieve her more  
Than what might heavest fall upon her.

ILYSE.

Aye!

She hath had then work enough to do to weep  
For them that list before; Northumberland,  
The choice of all the north spoiled, banished, slain,  
Norfolk that should have ringed the fourth sad time  
The fairest hand wherewith fate ever led  
So many a man to deathward, or sealed up  
So many an eye from sunlight.

BALDWIN.

By my head,

Which is the main stake of this cast, I swear  
There is none worth more than a tear of hers  
That man wears living or that man might lose,  
Home upright in the sun, or for her sake  
Bow'd down by theirs she weeps for: nay, but hear;  
She bids me take most vigilant heed, that all  
May prosperously find end assured, and you  
Conclude with me in judgment; to myself  
As chief of trust in my particular  
Refers you for assurance, and commends  
To counsel seasonable and time's advice  
Your common resolution; and again,  
If the design take yet not hold, as chance  
For all our will may turn it, we should not  
Pursue her transport nor the plot laid else  
Of our so baffled enterprise; but say  
When this were done we might not come at her  
Being by mishap close guarded in the Tower  
Or some strength else as dangerous, yet, she saith,  
For God's sake leave not to proceed herein  
To the utmost undertaking; for herself



BARNWELL.

Knowing at the least of her enfranchisement  
Whose life were worth the whole blood shed o' the world  
And all men's hearts made empty.

**Aye, good friend,**

Here speaks she of your fellows, that some stir  
Might be in Ireland laboured to begin  
Some time ere we take aught on us, that thence  
The alarm might spring right on the part opposed  
To where should grow the danger: she meantime  
Should while the work were even in hand assay  
To make the Catholics in her Scotland rise  
And put her son into their hands, that so  
No help may serve our enemies thence; again,  
That from our plots the stroke may come, she thinks  
To have some chief or general head of all  
Were now most apt for the instant end; wherein  
I branch not off from her in counsel, yet  
Conceive not how to send the appointed word  
To the earl of Arundel now fast in bonds  
Held in the Tower she spake of late, who now  
Would have us give him careful note of this,  
Him or his brethren; and from oversea  
Would have us seek, if he be there at large,  
To the young son of dead Northumberland,  
And Westmoreland, whose hand and name, we know,  
May do much northward; aye, but this we know,  
How much his hand was lesser than his name  
When proof was put on either; and the lord

Paget, whose power is in some shires of weight  
To incline them usward; both may now be had  
And some, she saith, of the exiles principal,  
If the enterprise be resolute once, with these  
May come back darkling; Paget lies in Spain,  
Whom we may treat with by his brother's mean,  
Charles, who keeps watch in Paris: then in the end  
She bids beware no messenger sent forth  
That bears our counsel bear our letters; these  
Must through blind hands precede them or ensue  
By ignorant posts and severally despatched;  
And of her sweet wise heart, as we were fools,  
—But that I think she fears not—bids take heed  
Of spies among us and false brethren, chief  
Of priests already practised on, she saith,  
By the enemy's craft against us; what, forsooth,  
We have not eyes to set such knaves apart  
And look their wiles through, but should need misdoubt  
—Whom shall I say the least on all our side?—  
Good Gilbert Gifford with his kind boy's face  
That fear's lean self could fear not? but God knows  
Woman is wise, but woman; none so bold,  
So cunning none, God help the soft sweet wit,  
But the fair flesh with weakness taints it; why,  
She warns me here of perilous scrolls to keep  
That I should never bear about me, seeing  
By that fault sank all they that fell before  
Who should have walked unwounded else of proof,  
Unstayed of justice: but this following word  
Hath savour of more judgment; we should let  
As little as we may our names be known  
*Or purpose here to the envoy sent from France,*

Whom though she hears for honest, we must fear  
His master holds the course of his design  
Far contrary to this of ours, which known  
Might move him to discovery.

TICHBORNE. Well forewarned:  
Forearmed enough were now that cause at need  
Which had but half so good an armour on  
To fight false faith or France in.

BABINGTON. Peace awhile;  
Here she winds up her craft. She hath long time sued  
To shift her lodging, and for answer hath  
None but the Castle of Dudley named as meet  
To serve this turn; and thither may depart,  
She thinks, with parting summer; whence may we  
Devise what means about those lands to lay  
For her deliverance; who from present bonds  
May but by one of three ways be discharged:  
When she shall ride forth on the moors that part  
Her prison-place from Stafford, where few folk  
Use to pass over, on the same day set,  
With fifty or threescore men well horsed and armed,  
To take her from her keeper's charge, who rides  
With but some score that bear but pistols; next,  
To come by deep night round the darkling house  
And fire the barns and stables, which being nigh  
Shall draw the household huddling forth to help,  
And they that come to serve her, wearing each  
A secret sign for note and cognisance,  
May some of them surprise the house, whom she  
Shall with her servants meet and second; last,  
When carts come in at morning, these being met  
In the main gateway's midst may by device



Fall or be sidelong overthrown, and we  
Make in thereon and suddenly possess  
The house whence lightly might we bear her forth  
Ere help came in of soldiers to relief  
Who lie a mile or half a mile away  
In several lodgings: but howe'er this end  
She holds her bounden to me all her days  
Who proffer me to hazard for her love,  
And doubtless shall as well esteem of you  
Or scarce less honourably, when she shall know  
Your names who serve beneath me; so commends  
Her friend to God, and bids me burn the word  
That I would wear at heart for ever; yet,  
Lest this sweet scripture haply write us dead,  
Where she set hand I set my lips, and thus  
Rend mine own heart with her sweet name, and end.

[*Tears the letter.*

SALISBURY. She hath chosen a trusty servant.

BABINGTON.

Aye, of me?

What ails you at her choice? was this not I  
That laid the ground of all this work, and wrought  
Your hearts to shape for service? or perchance  
The man was you that took this first on him,  
To serve her dying and living, and put on  
The bloodred name of traitor and the deed  
Found for her sake not murderous?

SALISBURY.

Why, they say

First Gifford put this on you, Ballard next,  
Whom he brought over to redeem your heart  
Half lost for doubt already, and refresh  
The flagging flame that fired it first, and now  
*Fell faltering half in ashes, whence his breath*

Hardly with hard pains quickened it and blew  
The grey to red rekindling.

BABINGTON. Sir, they lie  
Who say for fear I faltered, or lost heart  
For doubt to lose life after; let such know  
It shames me not though I were slow of will  
To take such work upon my soul and hand  
As killing of a queen; being once assured,  
Brought once past question, set beyond men's doubts  
By witness of God's will borne sensibly,  
Meseems I have swerved not.

SALISBURY.                      Aye, when once the word  
Was washed in holy water, you would wear  
Lightly the name so hallowed of priests' lips  
That men spell murderer; but till Ballard spake  
The shadow of her slaying whom we shall strike  
Was ice to freeze your purpose.

TICHBORNE. Friend, what then?  
Is this so small a thing, being English born,  
To strike the living empire here at heart  
That is called England? stab her present state,  
Give even her false-faced likeness up to death,  
With hands that smite a woman? I that speak,  
Ye know me if now my faith be firm, and will  
To do faith's bidding; yet it wrings not me  
To say I was not quick nor light of heart,  
Though moved perforce of will unwillingly,  
To take in trust this charge upon me.

BARNWELL. I  
With all good will would take, and give God thanks,  
The charge of all that falter in it: by heaven,  
To hear in the end of doubts and doublings heaves

My heart up as with sickness. Why, by this  
The heretic harlot that confounds our hope  
Should be made carrion, with those following four  
That were to wait upon her dead: all five  
Live yet to scourge God's servants, and we prate  
And threaten here in painting: by my life,  
I see no more in us of life or heart  
Than in this heartless picture.

BABINGTON.

Peace again;

Our purpose shall not long lack life, nor they  
Whose life is deadly to the heart of ours  
Much longer keep it; Burghley, Walsingham,  
Hunsdon and Knowles, all these four names writ out,  
With hers at head they worship, are but now  
As those five several letters that spell death  
In eyes that read them right. Give me but faith  
A little longer: trust that heart awhile  
Which laid the ground of all our glories; think  
I that was chosen of our queen's friends in France,  
By Morgan's hand there prisoner for her sake  
On charge of such a deed's device as ours  
Commended to her for trustiest, and a man  
More sure than might be Ballard and more fit  
To bear the burden of her counsels—I  
Can be not undeserving, whom she trusts,  
That ye should likewise trust me; seeing at first  
She writes me but a thankful word, and this,  
God wot, for little service; I return  
For aptest answer and thankworthiest need  
Word of the usurper's plotted end, and she  
With such large heart of trust and liberal faith  
*As here ye have heard requites me: whom, I think,*

For you to trust is no too great thing now  
For me to ask and have of all.

TICHBORNE.

Dear friend,

Mistrust has no part in our mind of you  
More than in hers; yet she too bids take heed,  
As I would bid you take, and let not slip  
The least of her good counsels, which to keep  
No whit proclaims us colder than herself  
Who gives us charge to keep them; and to slight  
No whit proclaims us less unserviceable  
Who are found too hot to serve her than the slave  
Who for cold heart and fear might fail.

BABINGTON.

Too hot!

Why, what man's heart hath heat enough or blood  
To give for such good service? Look you, sirs,  
This is no new thing for my faith to keep,  
My soul to feed its fires with, and my hope  
Fix eyes upon for star to steer by; she  
That six years hence the boy that I was then,  
And page, ye know, to Shrewsbury, gave his faith  
To serve and worship with his body and soul  
For only lady and queen, with power alone  
To lift my heart up and bow down mine eyes  
At sight and sense of her sweet sovereignty,  
Made thence her man for ever; she whose look  
Turned all my blood of life to tears and fire,  
That going or coming, sad or glad—for yet  
She would be somewhat merry, as though to give  
Comfort, and ease at heart her servants, then  
Weep smilingly to be so light of mind,  
Saying she was like the bird grown blithe in bonds  
That if too late set free would die for fear,

Or wild birds hunt it out of life—if sad,  
Put madness in me for her suffering's sake,  
If joyous, for her very love's sake—still  
Made my heart mad alike to serve her, being  
I know not when the sweeter, sad or blithe,  
Nor what mood heavenliest of her, all whose change  
Was as of stars and sun and moon in heaven;  
She is well content,—ye have heard her—she, to die,  
If we without her may redeem ourselves  
And loose our lives from bondage; but her friends  
Must take forsooth good heed they be not, no,  
Too hot of heart to serve her! And for me,  
Am I so vain a thing of wind and smoke  
That your deep counsel must have care to keep  
My lightness safe in wardship? I sought none—  
Craved no man's counsel to draw plain my plot,  
Need no man's warning to dispose my deed.  
Have I not laid of mine own hand a snare  
To bring no less a lusty bird to lure  
Than Walsingham with proffer of myself  
For scout and spy on mine own friends in France  
To fill his wise wide ears with large report  
Of all things wrought there on our side, and plots  
Laid for our queen's sake? and for all his wit  
This politic knave misdoubts me not, whom ye  
Hold yet too light and lean of wit to pass  
Unspied of wise men on our enemies' part,  
Who have sealed the subtlest eyes up of them all.

TICHBORNE. That would I know; for if they be not  
blind,  
But only wink upon your proffer, seeing  
*More than they let your own eyes find or fear,*

Why, there may lurk a fire to burn us all  
Masked in them with false blindness.

BARINGTON.

Hear you, sirs?

Now by the faith I had in this my friend  
And by mine own yet flawless toward him, yea  
By all true love and trust that holds men fast,  
It shames me that I held him in this cause  
Half mine own heart, my better hand and eye,  
Mine other soul and worthier. Pray you, go;  
Let us not hold you; sir, be quit of us;  
Go home, lie safe, and give God thanks; lie close,  
Keep your head warm and covered; nay, be wise;  
We are fit for no such wise folk's fellowship,  
No married man's who being bid forth to fight  
Holds his wife's kirtle fitter wear for man  
Than theirs who put on iron: I did know it,  
Albeit I would not know; this man that was,  
This soul and sinew of a noble seed,  
Love and the lips that burn a bridegroom's through  
Have charmed to deathward, and in steel's good stead  
Left him a silken spirit.

TICHBORNE.

By that faith

Which yet I think you have found as fast in me  
As ever yours I found, you wrong me more  
Than were I that your words can make me not  
I had wronged myself and all our cause; I hold  
No whit less dear for love's sake even than love  
Faith, honour, friendship, all that all my days  
Was only dear to my desire, till now  
This new thing dear as all these only were  
Made all these dearer. If my love be less  
Toward you, toward honour or this cause, then think

I love my wife too dearly, whom you know  
 How close it near I cherish, but it is  
 My task to live. I fear now what you will  
 And what will happen though it is not  
 I was not stronger, stronger shall I be to the  
 And might be no dangerous when you go  
 For the small virtues were in you and strength  
 For the the strength, with your eyes and heart  
 And I have found it in my heart, and think  
 No strength against your courage: for in heaven  
 I have found it, and that my heart will be  
 That you are not necessarily strong  
 To be a man, and strong.

HAMILTON.

What you said

Some days ago, I think you said, that you  
 A strong man, a man, a man, a man  
 And that you are my friend, and that you  
 The same, and that you are a man, and  
 Strong to live and strong, there were more proof  
 To make me to be a man, and to be strong.

But HAMILTON, HAMILTON, and STONE

And that you are a man, and that you are  
 A strong man, and that you are a man  
 And that you are a man, and that you are

HAMILTON.

What you said

Is my strength to live and to be  
 My, and to be a man, and to be  
 I am a man, and to be a man, and to be  
 So I have a man, and to be a man, and to be  
 Strong to live, and to be a man, and to be  
 For that you are a man, and to be a man, and to be  
 Things I love, I am a man, and to be

Ye shall not say I cheered you to your death,  
 Nor would, though nought more dangerous than your death  
 Or deadlier for our cause and God's in ours  
 Were here to stand the chance of, and your blood  
 Shed vainly with no seed for faith to sow  
 Should be not poison for men's hopes to drink.  
 What is this picture? Have ye sense or souls,  
 Eyes, ears, or wits to take assurance in  
 Of how ye stand in strange men's eyes and ears,  
 How fare upon their talking tongues, how dwell  
 In shot of their suspicion, and sustain  
 How great a work how lightly? Think ye not  
 These men have ears and eyes about your ways,  
 Walk with your feet, work with your hands, and watch  
 When ye sleep sound and babble in your sleep?  
 What knave was he, or whose man sworn and spy,  
 That drank with you last night? whose hireling lip  
 Was this that pledged you, Master Babington,  
 To a foul quean's downfall and a fair queen's rise?  
 Can ye not seal your tongues from tavern speech,  
 Nor sup abroad but air may catch it back,  
 Nor think who set that watch upon your lips  
 Yourselves can keep not on them?

BABINGTON.

What, my friends!

Here is one come to counsel, God be thanked,  
 That bears commission to rebuke us all.  
 Why, hark you, sir, you that speak judgment, you  
 That take our doom upon your double tongue  
 To sentence and accuse us with one breath,  
 Our doomsman and our justicer for sin,  
 Good Captain Ballard, Father Fortescue,  
 Who made you guardian of us poor men, gave



I love my wife not either, whom you know  
How close at heart I cherish, but in all  
Play false alike. Lead now which way you will,  
And wear what likeness; though to all men else  
It look not smooth, smooth shall it seem to me,  
And danger be not dangerous; where you go,  
For me shall wildest ways be safe, and straight  
For me the steepest; with your eyes and heart  
Will I take count of life and death, and think  
No thought against your counsel: yea, by heaven,  
I had rather follow and trust my friend and die  
Than halt and hark mistrustfully behind  
To live of him mistrusted.

BABINGTON.

Why, well said:

Strike hands upon it; I think you shall not find  
A trustless pilot of me. Keep we fast,  
And hold you fast my counsel, we shall see  
The state high-builed here of heretic hope  
Shaken to dust and death. Here comes more proof  
To warrant me no liar. You are welcome, sirs;

*Enter BALLARD, disguised, and SAVAGE.*

Good father captain, come you plumed or cowed,  
Or stoled or sworded, here at any hand  
The true heart bids you welcome.

BALLARD.

Sir, at none

Is folly welcome to mine ears or eyes.  
Nay, stare not on me stormily; I say,  
I bid at no hand welcome, by no name,  
Be it ne'er so wise or valiant on men's lips,  
Pledge health to folly, nor forecast good hope  
For them that serve her, I, but take of men  
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Your wisdom wardship of our follies, chose  
Your faith for keeper of our faiths, that yet  
Were never taxed of change or doubted? You,  
'Tis you that have an eye to us, and take note  
What time we keep, what place, what company,  
How far may wisdom trust us to be wise  
Or faith esteem us faithful, and yourself  
Were once the hireling hand and tongue and eye  
That waited on this very Walsingham  
To spy men's counsels and betray their blood  
Whose trust had sealed you trusty? By God's light,  
A goodly guard I have of you, to crave  
What man was he I drank with yesternight,  
What name, what shape, what habit, as, forsooth,  
Were I some statesman's knave and spotted spy,  
The man I served, and cared not how, being dead,  
His molten gold should glut my throat in hell,  
Might question of me whom I snared last night,  
Make inquisition of his face, his gait,  
His speech, his likeness. Well, be answered then;  
By God, I know not; but God knows I think  
The spy most dangerous on my secret walks  
And witness of my ways most worth my fear  
And deadliest listener to devour my speech  
Now questions me of danger, and the tongue  
Most like to sting my trust and life to death  
Now taxes mine of rashness.

BALLARD.

Is he mad?

Or are ye brainsick all with heat of wine  
That stand and hear him rage like men in storms  
Made drunk with danger? have ye sworn with him  
*To die the fool's death too of furious fear*

And passion scared to slaughter of itself?  
Is there none here that knows his cause or me,  
Nor what should save or spoil us?

TICHBORNE.

Friend, give ear;

For God's sake, yet be counselled.

BABINGTON.

Aye, for God's!

What part hath God in this man's counsels? nay,  
Take you part with him; nay, in God's name go;  
What should you do to bide with me? turn back;  
There stands your captain.

SAVAGE.

Hath not one man here

One spark in spirit or sprinkling left of shame?  
I that looked once for no such fellowship,  
But soldier's hearts in shapes of gentlemen,  
I am sick with shame to hear men's jangling tongues  
Outnoise their swords unbloodied. Hear me, sirs;  
My hand keeps time before my tongue, and hath  
But wit to speak in iron; yet as now  
Such wit were sharp enough to serve our turn  
That keenest tongues may serve not. One thing sworn  
Calls on our hearts; the queen must singly die,  
Or we, half dead men now with dallying, must  
Die several deaths for her brief one, and stretched  
Beyond the scope of sufferance; wherefore here  
Choose out the man to put this peril on  
And gird him with this glory; let him pass  
Straight hence to court, and through all stays of state  
Strike death into her heart.

BABINGTON.

Why, this rings right;

Well said, and soldierlike; do thus, and take  
The vanguard of us all for honour.

SAVAGE.

Aye,

Well would I go, but seeing no courtly suit  
Like yours, her servants and her pensioners,  
The doorkeepers will bid my baseness back  
From passage to her presence.

BABINGTON. O, for that,  
Take this and buy; nay, start not from your word;  
You shall not.

SAVAGE. Sir, I shall not.

BABINGTON. Here's more gold;  
Make haste, and God go with you; if the plot  
Be blown on once of men's suspicious breath,  
We are dead, and all die bootless deaths—be swift—  
And her we have served we shall but surely slay.  
I will make trial again of Walsingham  
If he misdoubt us. O, my cloak and sword—

*[Knocking within.]*

I will go forth myself. What noise is that?  
Get you to Gage's lodging; stay not here;  
Make speed without for Westminster; perchance  
There may we safely shift our shapes and fly,  
If the end be come upon us.

BALLARD. It is here.  
Death knocks at door already. Fly; farewell.

BABINGTON. I would not leave you—but they know  
you not—  
You need not fear, being found here singly.

BALLARD. No.

BABINGTON. Nay, halt not, sirs; no word but haste;  
this way,  
Ere they break down the doors. God speed us well!

*[Exeunt all but BALLARD. As they go out  
enter an Officer with Soldiers.]*

OFFICER. Here's one fox yet by the foot; lay hold on him.

BALLARD. What would you, sirs?

OFFICER. Why, make one foul bird fast,  
Though the full flight be scattered: for their kind  
Must prey not here again, nor here put on  
The jay's loose feathers for the raven priest's  
To mock the blear-eyed marksman: these plucked off  
Shall show the nest that sent this fledgeling forth,  
Hatched in the hottest holy nook of hell.

BALLARD. I am a soldier.

OFFICER. Aye, the badge we know  
Whose broidery signs the shoulders of the file  
That Satan marks for Jesus. Bind him fast:  
Blue satin and slashed velvet and gold lace,  
Methinks we have you, and the hat's band here  
So seemly set with silver buttons, all  
As here was down in order; by my faith,  
A goodly ghostly friend to shrive a maid  
As ever kissed for penance: pity 'tis  
The hangman's hands must hallow him again  
When this lay slough slips off, and twist one rope  
For priest to swing with soldier. Bring him hence.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—*Chartley.*

MARY STUART *and* MARY BEATON.

MARY STUART. We shall not need keep house for  
fear to-day;  
The skies are fair and hot; the wind sits well  
For hound and horn to chime with. I will go.

MARY BEATON. How far from this to Tixall?

MARY STUART. Nine or ten

Or what miles more I care not; we shall find  
Fair field and goodly quarry, or he lies,  
The gospeller that bade us to the sport,  
Protesting yesternight the shire had none  
To shame Sir Walter Aston's. God be praised,  
I take such pleasure yet to back my steed  
And bear my crossbow for a deer's death well,  
I am almost half content—and yet I lie—  
To ride no harder nor more dangerous heat  
And hunt no beast of game less gallant.

MARY BEATON. Nay,

You grew long since more patient.

MARY STUART. Ah, God help!

What should I do but learn the word of him  
These years and years, the last word learnt but one,  
That ever I loved least of all sad words?  
The last is death for any soul to learn,  
The last save death is patience.

MARY BEATON. Time enough

We have had ere death of life to learn it in  
Since you rode last on wilder ways than theirs  
That drive the dun deer to his death.

MARY STUART. Eighteen—

How many more years yet shall God mete out  
For thee and me to wait upon their will  
And hope or hope not, watch or sleep, and dream  
Awake or sleeping? surely fewer, I think,  
Than half these years that all have less of life  
Than one of those more fleet that flew before.  
I am yet some ten years younger than this queen,

Some nine or ten; but if I die this year  
And she some score years longer than I think  
Be royal-titled, in one year of mine  
I shall have lived the longer life, and die  
The fuller-fortuned woman. Dost thou mind  
The letter that I writ nigh two years gone  
To let her wit what privacies of hers  
Our trusty dame of Shrewsbury's tongue made mine  
Ere it took fire to sting her lord and me?  
How thick soe'er o'erscurfed with poisonous lies,  
Of her I am sure it lied not; and perchance  
I did the wiselier, having writ my fill,  
Yet to withhold the letter when she sought  
Of me to know what villainies had it poured  
In ears of mine against her innocent name:  
And yet thou knowest what mirthful heart was mine  
To write her word of these, that had she read  
Had surely, being but woman, made her mad,  
Or haply, being not woman, had not. 'Faith,  
How say'st thou? did I well?

MARY BEATON.

Aye, surely well

To keep that back you did not ill to write.

MARY STUART. I think so, and again I think not; yet  
The best I did was bid thee burn it. She,  
That other Bess I mean of Hardwick, hath  
Mixed with her gall the fire at heart of hell,  
And all the mortal medicines of the world  
To drug her speech with poison; and God wot  
Her daughter's child here that I bred and loved,  
Bess Pierpoint, my sweet bedfellow that was,  
Keeps too much savour of her grandam's stock  
For me to match with Nau; my secretary



And those salt springs of life, through fire and tears  
That bring forth pain and pleasure in their kind  
To make good days and evil, all in her  
Lie sere and sapless as the dust of death.  
I have found no great good hap in all my days  
Nor much good cause to make me glad of God,  
Yet have I had and lacked not of my life  
My good things and mine evil: being not yet  
Barred from life's natural ends of evil and good  
Foredoomed for man and woman through the world  
Till all their works be nothing: and of mine  
I know but this—though I should die to-day,  
I would not take for mine her fortune.

MARY BEATON.

No?

Myself perchance I would not.

MARY STUART.

Dost thou think

That fire-tongued witch of Shrewsbury spake once truth  
Who told me all those quaint foul merry tales  
Of our dear sister that at her desire  
I writ to give her word of, and at thine  
Withheld and put the letter in thine hand  
To burn as was thy counsel? for my part,  
How loud she lied soever in the charge  
That for adultery taxed me with her lord  
And being disproved before the council here  
Brought on their knees to give themselves the lie  
Her and her sons by that first lord of four  
That took in turn this hell-mouthed hag to wife  
And got her kind upon her, yet in this  
I do believe she lied not more than I  
Reporting her by record, how she said  
What infinite times had Leicester and his queen



Plucked all the fruitless fruit of baffled love  
That being contracted privily they might,  
With what large gust of fierce and foiled desire  
This votaress crowned, whose vow could no man break,  
Since God whose hand shuts up the unkindly womb  
Had sealed it on her body, man by man  
Would course her kindless lovers, and in quest  
Pursue them hungering as a hound in heat,  
Full on the fiery scent and slot of lust,  
That men took shame and laughed and marvelled; one,  
Her chamberlain, so hotly would she trace  
And turn perforce from cover, that himself  
Being tracked at sight thus in the general eye  
Was even constrained to play the piteous hare  
And wind and double till her amorous chase  
Were blind with speed and breathless; but the worst  
Was this, that for this country's sake and shame's  
Our huntress Dian could not be content  
With Hatton and another born her man  
And subject of this kingdom, but to heap  
The heavier scandal on her countrymen  
Had cast the wild growth of her lust away  
On one base-born, a stranger, whom of nights  
Within her woman's chamber would she seek  
To kiss and play for shame with secretly;  
And with the duke her bridegroom that should be,  
That should and could not, seeing forsooth no man  
Might make her wife or woman, had she dealt  
As with this knave his follower; for by night  
She met him coming at her chamber door  
In her bare smock and night-rail, and thereon  
*Bade him come in; who there abode three hours:*

But fools were they that thought to bind her will  
And stay with one man or allay the mood  
That ranging still gave tongue on several heats  
To hunt fresh trails of lusty love; all this,  
Thou knowest, on record truly was set down,  
With much more villainous else: she prayed me write  
That she might know the natural spirit and mind  
Toward her of this fell witch whose rancorous mouth  
Then bayed my name, as now being great with child  
By her fourth husband, in whose charge I lay  
As here in Paulet's; so being moved I wrote,  
And yet I would she had read it, though not now  
Would I re-write each word again, albeit  
I might, or thou, were I so minded, or  
Thyself so moved to bear such witness; but  
'Tis well we know not how she had borne to read  
All this and more, what counsel gave the dame,  
With loud excess of laughter urging me  
To enter on those lists of love-making  
My son for suitor to her, who thereby  
Might greatly serve and stead me in her sight;  
And I replying that such a thing could be  
But held a very mockery, she returns,  
The queen was so infatuate and distraught  
With high conceit of her fair fretted face  
As of a heavenly goddess, that herself  
Would take it on her head with no great pains  
To bring her to believe it easily;  
Being so past reason fain of flattering tongues  
She thought they mocked her not nor lied who said  
They might not sometimes look her full in face  
For the light glittering from it as the sun;

And so perforce must all her women say  
And she herself that spake, who durst not look  
For fear to laugh out each in other's face  
Even while they fooled and fed her vein with words,  
Nor let their eyes cross when they spake to her  
And set their feature fast as in a frame  
To keep grave countenance with gross mockery lined;  
And how she prayed me chide her daughter, whom  
She might by no means move to take this way,  
And for her daughter Talbot was assured  
She could not ever choose but laugh outright  
Even in the good queen's flattered face. God wot,  
Had she read all, and in my hand set down,  
I could not blame her though she had sought to take  
My head for payment; no less poise on earth  
Had served, and hardly, for the writer's fee;  
I could not much have blamed her; all the less,  
That I did take this, though from slanderous lips,  
For gospel and not slander, and that now  
I yet do well believe it.

MARY BEATON.                      And herself  
Had well believed so much, and surely seen,  
For all your protest of discredit made  
With God to witness that you could not take  
Such tales for truth of her nor would not, yet  
You meant not she should take your word for this,  
As well I think she would not.

MARY STUART.                      Haply, no.  
We do protest not thus to be believed.  
And yet the witch in one thing seven years since  
Belied her, saying she then must needs die soon  
*For timeless fault of nature.* Now belike

The soothsaying that speaks short her span to be  
May prove more true of presage.

MARY BEATON. Have you hope  
The chase to-day may serve our further ends  
Than to renew your spirit and bid time speed?

MARY STUART. I see not but I may; the hour is full  
Which I was bidden expect of them to bear  
More fruit than grows of promise; Babington  
Should tarry now not long; from France our friends  
Lift up their heads to usward, and await  
What comfort may confirm them from our part  
Who sent us comfort; Ballard's secret tongue  
Has kindled England, striking from men's hearts  
As from a flint the fire that slept, and made  
Their dark dumb thoughts and dim disfigured hopes  
Take form from his and feature, aim and strength,  
Speech and desire toward action; all the shires  
Wherein the force lies hidden of our faith  
Are stirred and set on edge of present deed  
And hope more imminent now of help to come  
And work to do than ever; not this time  
We hang on trust in succour that comes short  
By Philip's fault from Austrian John, whose death  
Put widow's weeds on mine unwedded hope,  
Late trothplight to his enterprise in vain  
That was to set me free, but might not seal  
The faith it pledged nor on the hand of hope  
Make fast the ring that weds desire with deed  
And promise with performance; Parma stands  
More fast now for us in his uncle's stead,  
Albeit the lesser warrior, yet in place  
More like to avail us, and in happier time

To do like service; for my cousin of Guise,  
His hand and league hold fast our kinsman king,  
If not to bend and shape him for our use,  
Yet so to govern as he may not thwart  
Our forward undertaking till its force  
Discharge itself on England: from no side  
I see the shade of any fear to fail  
As those before so baffled; heart and hand  
Our hope is armed with trust more strong than steel  
And spirit to strike more helpful than a sword  
In hands that lack the spirit; and here to-day  
It may be I shall look this hope in the eyes  
And see her face transfigured. God is good  
He will not fail his faith for ever. O,  
That I were now in saddle! Yet an hour  
And I shall be as young again as May  
Whose life was come to August; like this year,  
I had grown past midway of my life, and sat  
Heartsick of summer; but new-mounted now  
I shall ride right through shine and shade of spring  
With heart and habit of a bride, and bear  
A brow more bright than fortune. Truth it is,  
Those words of bride and May should on my tongue  
Sound now not merry, ring no joy-bells out  
In ears of hope or memory; not for me  
Have they been joyous words; but this fair day  
All sounds that ring delight in fortunate ears  
And words that make men thankful, even to me  
Seem thankworthy for joy they have given me not  
And hope which now they should not.

MARY BEATON.

Nay, who knows

*The less they have given of joy, the more they may;*

And they who have had their happiness before  
Have hope not in the future; time o'erpast  
And time to be have several ends, nor wear  
One forward face and backward.

MARY STUART.                      God, I pray,  
Turn thy good words to gospel, and make truth  
Of their kind presage! but our Scotswomen  
Would say, to be so joyous as I am,  
Though I had cause, as surely cause I have,  
Were no good warrant of good hope for me.  
I never took such comfort of my trust  
In Norfolk or Northumberland, nor looked  
For such good end as now of all my fears  
From all devices past of policy  
To join my name with my misnated son's  
In handfast pledge with England's, ere my foes  
His counsellors had flawed his craven faith  
And moved my natural blood to cast me off  
Who bore him in my body, to come forth  
Less childlike than a changeling. But not long  
Shall they find means by him to work their will,  
Nor he bear head against me; hope was his  
To reign forsooth without my fellowship,  
And he that with me would not shall not now  
Without or with me wield not or divide  
Or part or all of empire.

MARY BEATON.                      Dear my queen,  
Vex not your mood with sudden change of thoughts;  
Your mind but now was merrier than the sun  
Half rid by this through morning: we by noon  
Should blithely mount and meet him.

MARY STUART.                      So I said.

My spirit is fallen again from that glad strength  
 Which even but now arrayed it; yet what cause  
 Should dull the dancing measure in my blood  
 For doubt or wrath, I know not. Being once forth,  
 My heart again will quicken. [Sings.

*And ye maun braid your yellow hair  
 And busk ye like a bride;  
 Wi' sevenscore men to bring ye hame,  
 And ae true love beside;  
 Between the birk and the green rowan  
 Fu' blithely shall ye ride.*

*O ye maun braid my yellow hair,  
 But braid it like nae bride;  
 And I maun gang my ways, mither,  
 Wi' nae true love beside;  
 Between the kirk and the kirkyard  
 Fu' sadly shall I ride.*

How long since,  
 How long since was it last I heard or sang  
 Such light lost ends of old faint rhyme worn thin  
 With use of country songsters? When we twain  
 Were maidens but some twice a span's length high,  
 Thou hadst the happier memory to hold rhyme,  
 But not for songs the merrier.

MARY BEATON. This was one  
 That I would sing after my nurse, I think,  
 And weep upon in France at six years old  
 To think of Scotland.

MARY STUART. Would I weep for that,

Woman or child, I have had now years enough  
To weep in; thou wast never French in heart,  
Serving the queen of France. Poor queen that was,  
Poor boy that played her bridegroom! now they seem  
In these mine eyes that were her eyes as far  
Beyond the reach and range of oldworld time  
As their first fathers' graves.

*Enter SIR AMYAS PAULET.*

PAULET. Madam, if now  
It please you to set forth, the hour is full,  
And there your horses ready.

MARY STUART. Sir, my thanks.  
We are bounden to you and this goodly day  
For no small comfort. Is it your will we ride  
Accompanied with any for the nonce  
Of our own household?

PAULET. If you will, to-day  
Your secretaries have leave to ride with you.

MARY STUART. We keep some state then yet. I  
pray you, sir,  
Doth he wait on you that came here last month,  
A low-built lank-cheeked Judas-bearded man,  
Lean, supple, grave, pock-pitten, yellow-polled,  
A smiling fellow with a downcast eye?

PAULET. Madam, I know the man for none of mine.

MARY STUART. I give you joy as you should give  
God thanks,  
Sir, if I err not; but meseemed this man  
Found gracious entertainment here, and took  
Such counsel with you as I surely thought  
Spake him your friend, and honourable; but now  
If I misread not an ambiguous word



It seems you know no more of him or less  
Than Peter did, being questioned, of his Lord.

PAULET. I know not where the cause were to be sought  
That might for likeness or unlikeness found  
Make seemly way for such comparison  
As turns such names to jest and bitterness;  
Howbeit, as I denied not nor disclaimed  
To know the man you speak of, yet I may  
With very purity of truth profess  
The man to be not of my following.

MARY STUART. See  
How lightly may the tongue that thinks no ill  
Or trip or slip, discoursing that or this  
With grave good men in purity and truth,  
And come to shame even with a word! God wot,  
We had need put bit and bridle in our lips  
Ere they take on them of their foolishness  
To change wise words with wisdom. Come, sweet friend,  
Let us go seek our kind with horse and hound  
To keep us witless company; belike,  
There shall we find our fellows.

[*Exeunt MARY STUART and MARY BEATON.*]

PAULET. Would to God  
This day had done its office! mine till then  
Holds me the verier prisoner.

*Enter PHILLIPPS.*

PHILLIPPS. She will go?

PAULET. Gladly, poor sinful fool; more gladly, sir,  
Than I go with her.

PHILLIPPS. Yet you go not far  
She is come too near her end of wayfaring  
*To tire much more men's feet that follow.*

PAULET.

Aye.

She walks but half blind yet to the end; even now  
She spake of you, and questioned doubtfully  
What here you came to do, or held what place  
Or commerce with me: when you caught her eye,  
It seems your courtesy by some graceless chance  
Found but scant grace with her.

PHILLIPPS.

'Tis mine own blame,

Or fault of mine own feature; yet forsooth  
I greatly covet not their gracious hap  
Who have found or find most grace with her. I pray,  
Doth Wade go with you?

PAULET.

Nay,—what, know you not?—

But with Sir Thomas Gorges, from the court,  
To drive this deer at Tixall.

PHILLIPPS.

Two years since,

He went, I think, commissioned from the queen  
To treat with her at Sheffield?

PAULET.

Aye, and since

She hath not seen him; who being known of here  
Had haply given her swift suspicion edge  
Or cause at least of wonder.

PHILLIPPS.

And I doubt

His last year's entertainment oversea  
As our queen's envoy to demand of France  
Her traitor Morgan's body, whence he brought  
Nought save dry blows back from the duke d'Aumale  
And for that prisoner's quarters here to hang  
His own not whole but beaten, should not much  
Incline him to more good regard of her  
For whose love's sake her friends have dealt with him  
So honourably, nor she that knows of this

Be the less like to take his presence here  
For no good presage to her: you have both done well  
To keep his hand as close herein as mine.

PAULET. Sir, by my faith I know not, for myself,  
What part is for mine honour, or wherein  
Of all this action laid upon mine hand  
The name and witness of a gentleman  
May gain desert or credit, and increase  
In seed and harvest of good men's esteem  
For heritage to his heirs, that men unborn  
Whose fame is as their name derived from his  
May reap in reputation; and indeed  
I look for none advancement in the world  
Further than this that yet for no man's sake  
Would I forego, to keep the name I have  
And honour, which no son of mine shall say  
I have left him not for any deed of mine  
As perfect as my sire bequeathed it me:  
I say, for any word or work yet past  
No tongue can thus far tax me of decline  
From that fair forthright way of gentleman,  
Nor shall for any that I think to do  
Or aught I think to say alive: howbeit,  
I were much bounden to the man would say  
But so much for me in our mistress' ear,  
The treasurer's, or your master Walsingham's,  
Whose office here I have undergone thus long  
And had I leave more gladly would put off  
Than ever I put on me; being not one  
That out of love toward England even or God  
At mightiest men's desire would lightly be  
*For loyalty disloyal, or approved*

In trustless works a trusty traitor; this  
He that should tell them of me, to procure  
The speedier end here of this work imposed,  
Should bind me to him more heartily than thanks  
Might answer.

PHILLIPPS. Good Sir Amyas, you and I  
Hold no such office in this dangerous time  
As men make love to for their own name's sake  
Or personal lust of honour; but herein  
I pray you yet take note, and pardon me  
If I for the instance mix your name with mine,  
That no man's private honour lies at gage,  
Nor is the stake set here to play for less  
Than what is more than all men's names alive,  
The great life's gage of England; in whose name  
Lie all our own impledged, as all our lives  
For her redemption forfeit, if the cause  
Call once upon us; not this gift or this,  
Or what best likes us or were gladliest given  
Or might most honourably be parted with  
For our more credit on her best behalf,  
Doth she we serve, this land that made us men,  
Require of all her children; but demands  
Of our great duty toward her full deserts  
Even all we have of honour or of life,  
Of breath or fame to give her. What were I  
Or what were you, being mean or nobly born,  
Yet moulded both of one land's natural womb  
And fashioned out of England, to deny  
What gift she crave soever, choose and grudge  
What grace we list to give or what withhold,  
Refuse and reckon with her when she bids

Yield up forsooth not life but fame to come,  
A good man's praise or gentleman's repute,  
Or lineal pride of children, and the light  
Of loyalty remembered? which of these  
Were worth our mother's death, or shame that might  
Fall for one hour on England? She must live  
And keep in all men's sight her honour fast  
Though all we die dishonoured; and myself  
Know not nor seek of men's report to know  
If what I do to serve her till I die  
Be honourable or shameful, and its end  
Good in men's eyes or evil; but for God,  
I find not why the name or fear of him  
Herein should make me swerve or start aside  
Through faint heart's falsehood as a broken bow  
Snapped in his hand that bent it, ere the shaft  
Find out his enemies' heart, and I that end  
Whereto I am sped for service even of him  
Who put this office on us.

PAULET.

Truly, sir,

I lack the wordy wit to match with yours,  
Who speak no more than soldier; this I know,  
I am sick in spirit and heart to have in hand  
Such work or such device of yours as yet  
For fear and conscience of what worst may come  
I dare not well bear through.

PHILLIPPS.

Why, so last month

You writ my master word and me to boot  
I had set you down a course for many things  
You durst not put in execution, nor  
Consign the packet to this lady's hand  
*That was returned from mine, seeing all was well,*

And you should hold yourself most wretched man  
If by your mean or order there should spring  
Suspicion 'twixt the several messengers  
Whose hands unwitting each of other ply  
The same close trade for the same golden end,  
While either holds his mate a faithful fool  
And all their souls, baseborn or gently bred,  
Are coined and stamped and minted for our use  
And current in our service; I thereon  
To assuage your doubt and fortify your fear  
Was posted hither, where by craft and pains  
The web is wound up of our enterprise  
And in our hands we hold her very heart  
As far as all this while we held impawned  
The faith of Barnes that stood for Gifford here  
To take what letters for his mistress came  
From southward through the ambassador of France  
And bear them to the brewer, your honest man,  
Who wist no further of his fellowship  
Than he of Gifford's, being as simple knaves  
As knavish each in his simplicity,  
And either serviceable alike, to shift  
Between my master's hands and yours and mine  
Her letters writ and answered to and fro;  
And all these faiths as weathertight and safe  
As was the box that held those letters close  
At bottom of the barrel, to give up  
The charge there sealed and ciphered, and receive  
A charge as great in peril and in price  
To yield again, when they drew off the beer  
That weekly served this lady's household whom  
We have drained as dry of secrets drugged with death

As ever they this vessel, and return  
To her own lips the dregs she brewed or we  
For her to drink have tempered. What of this  
Should seem so strange now to you, or distaste  
So much the daintier palate of your thoughts,  
That I should need reiterate you by word  
The work of us o'erpast, or fill your ear  
With long foregone recital, that at last  
Your soul may start not or your sense recoil  
To know what end we are come to, or what hope  
We took in hand to cut this peril off  
By what close mean soe'er and what foul hands  
Unwashed of treason, which it yet mislikes  
Your knightly palm to touch or close with, seeing  
The grime of gold is baser than of blood  
That barks their filthy fingers? yet with these  
Must you cross hands and grapple, or let fall  
The trust you took to treasure.

PAULET.

Sir, I will,

Even till the queen take back that gave it; yet  
Will not join hands with these, nor take on mine  
The taint of their contagion; knowing no cause  
That should confound or couple my good name  
With theirs more hateful than the reek of hell.  
You had these knaveries and these knaves in charge,  
Not I that knew not how to handle them  
Nor whom to choose for chief of treasons, him  
That in mine ignorant eye, unused to read  
The shameful scripture of such faces, bare  
Graved on his smooth and simple cheek and brow  
No token of a traitor; yet this boy,  
*This milk-mouthed weanling with his maiden chin,*

This soft-lipped knave, late suckled as on blood  
And nursed of poisonous nipples, have you not  
Found false or feared by this, whom first you found  
A trustier thief and worthier of his wage  
Than I, poor man, had wit to find him? I,  
That trust no changelings of the church of hell,  
No babes reared priestlike at the paps of Rome  
Who have left the old harlot's deadly dugs drawn dry,  
I lacked the craft to rate this knave of price,  
Your smock-faced Gifford, at his worth aright,  
Which now comes short of promise.

PHILLIPPS. O, not he;  
Let not your knighthood for a slippery word  
So much misdoubt his knaveship; here from France,  
On hint of our suspicion in his ear  
Half jestingly recorded, that his hand  
Were set against us in one politic track  
With his old yoke-fellows in craft and creed,  
Betraying not them to us but ourselves to them,  
My Gilbert writes me with such heat of hand  
Such piteous protestation of his faith  
So stuffed and swoln with burly-bellied oaths  
And God and Christ confound him if he lie  
And Jesus save him as he speaks mere truth,  
My gracious godly priestling, that yourself  
Must sure be moved to take his truth on trust  
Or stand for him approved an atheist.

PAULET. Well,  
That you find stuff of laughter in such gear  
And mirth to make out of the godless mouth  
Of such a twice-turned villain, for my part  
I take in token of your certain trust,



And make therewith mine own assurance sure,  
To see betimes an end of all such craft  
As takes the faith forsworn of loud-tongued liars  
And blasphemies of brothel-breathing knaves  
To build its hope or break its jest upon;  
And so commend you to your charge, and take  
Mine own on me less gladly; for by this  
She should be girt to ride, as the old saw saith,  
Out of God's blessing into the warm sun  
And out of the warm sun into the pit  
That men have dug before her, as herself  
Had dug for England else a deeper grave  
To hide our hope for ever: yet I would  
This day and all that hang on it were done. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*Before Tixall Park.*

MARY STUART, MARY BEATON, PAULET, CURLE, NAU,  
*and Attendants.*

MARY STUART. If I should never more back steed  
alive

But now had ridden hither this fair day  
The last road ever I must ride on earth,  
Yet would I praise it, saying of all days gone  
And all roads ridden in sight of stars and sun  
Since first I sprang to saddle, here at last  
I had found no joyless end. These ways are smooth,  
And all this land's face merry; yet I find  
The ways even therefore not so good to ride,  
And all the land's face therefore less worth love,  
Being smoother for a palfrey's maiden pace

And merrier than our moors for outlook; nay,  
I lie to say so; there the wind and sun  
Make madder mirth by midsummer, and fill  
With broader breath and lustier length of light  
The heartier hours that clothe for even and dawn  
Our bosom-belted billowy-blossoming hills  
Whose hearts break out in laughter like the sea  
For miles of heaving heather. Ye should mock  
My banished praise of Scotland; and in faith  
I praised it but to prick you on to praise  
Of your own goodly land; though field and wood  
Be parked and parcelled to the sky's edge out,  
And this green Stafford moorland smooth and strait  
That we but now rode over, and by ours  
Look pale for lack of large live mountain bloom  
Wind-buffeted with morning, it should be  
Worth praise of men whose lineal honour lives  
In keeping here of history: but meseems  
I have heard, Sir Amyas, of your liberal west  
As of a land more affluent-souled than this  
And fruitful-hearted as the south-wind; here  
I find a fair-faced change of temperate clime  
From that bald hill-brow in a broad bare plain  
Where winter laid us both his prisoners late  
Fast by the feet at Tutbury; but men say  
Your birthright in this land is fallen more fair  
In goodlier ground of heritage: perchance,  
Grief to be now barred thence by mean of me,  
Who less than you can help it or myself,  
Makes you ride sad and sullen.

PAULET.

Madam, no;

I pray you lay not to my wilful charge



Hunting your own deer's trail at home, who lies  
Now close in covert till her bearing-time  
Be full to bring forth kindly fruit of kind  
To love that yet lacks issue; and in sooth  
I blame you not to bid all sport go by  
For one white doe's sake travailing, who myself  
Think long till I may take within mine arm  
The soft fawn suckling that is yeaned not yet  
But is to make her mother. We must hold  
A goodly christening feast with prisoner's cheer  
And mirth enow for such a tender thing  
As will not weep more to be born in bonds  
Than babes born out of gaoler's ward, nor grudge  
To find no friend more fortunate than I  
Nor happier hand to welcome it, nor name  
More prosperous than poor mine to wear, if God  
Shall send the new-made mother's breast, for love  
Of us that love his mother's maidenhood,  
A maid to be my namechild, and in all  
Save love to them that love her, by God's grace,  
Most unlike me; for whose unborn sweet sake  
Pray you meantime be merry.—'Faith, methinks  
Here be more huntsmen out afield to-day  
And merrier than my guardian. Sir, look up;  
What think you of these riders?—All my friends,  
Make on to meet them.

PAULET.                                There shall need no haste;  
They ride not slack or lamely.

MARY STUART.                    Now, fair sir,  
What say you to my chance on wager? here  
I think to outshoot your archery.—By my life,  
That too must fail if hope now fail me; these

That ride so far off yet, being come, shall bring  
Death or deliverance. Prithee, speak but once;

[*Aside to MARY BEATON.*

Say, these are they we looked for; say, thou too  
Hast hope to meet them; say, they should be here,  
And I did well to look for them; O God!  
Say but I was not mad to hope; see there;  
Speak, or I die.

MARY BEATON. Nay, not before they come.

MARY STUART. Dost thou not hear my heart? it  
speaks so loud

I can hear nothing of them. Yet I will not  
Fail in mine enemy's sight. This is mine hour  
That was to be for triumph; God, I pray,  
Stretch not its length out longer!

MARY BEATON. It is past.

*Enter SIR THOMAS GORGES, SIR WILLIAM WADE,  
and Soldiers.*

MARY STUART. What man is this that stands across  
our way?

GORGES. One that hath warrant, madam, from the  
queen

To arrest your French and English secretary  
And for more surety see yourself removed  
To present ward at Tixall here hard by,  
As in this paper stands of her subscribed.  
Lay hands on them.

MARY STUART. Was this your riddle's word?

[*To PAULET.*

You have shot beyond me indeed, and shot to death  
Your honour with my life.—Draw, sirs, and stand;  
*Ye have swords yet left to strike with once, and die*

By these our foes are girt with. Some good friend—  
I should have one yet left of you—take heart  
And slay me here. For God's love, draw; they have not  
So large a vantage of us we must needs  
Bear back one foot from peril. Give not way;  
Ye shall but die more shamefully than here  
Who can but here die fighting. What, no man?  
Must I find never at my need alive  
A man with heart to help me? O, my God,  
Let me die now and foil them! Paulet, you,  
Most knightly liar and traitor, was not this  
Part of your charge, to play my hangman too,  
Who have played so well my doomsman, and betrayed  
So honourably my trust, so bravely set  
A snare so loyal to make sure for death  
So poor a foolish woman? Sir, or you  
That have this gallant office, great as his,  
To do the deadliest errand and most vile  
That even your mistress ever laid on man  
And sent her basest knave to bear and slay,  
You are likewise of her chivalry, and should not  
Shrink to fulfil your title; being a knight,  
For her dear sake that made you, lose not heart  
To strike for her one worthy stroke, that may  
Rid me defenceless of the loathed long life  
She gapes for like a bloodhound. Nay, I find  
A face beside you that should bear for me  
Not life inscribed upon it; two years since  
I read therein at Sheffield what good will  
She bare toward me that sent to treat withal  
So mean a man and shameless, by his tongue  
To smite mine honour on the face, and turn

My name of queen to servant; by his hand  
So let her turn my life's name now to death,  
Which I would take more thankfully than shame  
To plead and thus prevail not.

PAULET.

Madam, no,

With us you may not in such suit prevail  
Nor we by words or wrath of yours be moved  
To turn their edge back on you, nor remit  
The least part of our office, which deserves  
Nor scorn of you nor wonder, whose own act  
Has laid it on us; wherefore with less rage  
Please you take thought now to submit yourself,  
Even for your own more honour, to the effect  
Whose cause was of your own device, that here  
Bears fruit unlooked for; which being ripe in time  
You cannot choose but taste of, nor may we  
But do the season's bidding, and the queen's  
Who weeps at heart to know it.—Disarm these men;  
Take you the prisoners to your present ward  
And hence again to London; here meanwhile  
Some week or twain their lady must lie close  
And with a patient or impatient heart  
Expect an end and word of judgment: I  
Must with Sir William back to Chartley straight  
And there make inquisition ere day close  
What secret serpents of what treasons hatched  
May in this lady's papers lurk, whence we  
Must pluck the fangs forth of them yet unfleshed,  
And lay these plots like dead and strangled snakes  
Naked before the council.

MARY STUART.

I must go?

GORGES. Madam, no help; I pray your pardon.

MARY STUART.

Aye?

Had I your pardon in this hand to give,  
And here in this my vengeance—Words, and words!  
God, for thy pity! what vile thing is this  
That thou didst make of woman? even in death,  
As in the extremest evil of all our lives,  
We can but curse or pray, but prate and weep,  
And all our wrath is wind that works no wreck,  
And all our fire as water. Noble sirs,  
We are servants of your servants, and obey  
The beck of your least groom; obsequiously,  
We pray you but report of us so much,  
Submit us to you. Yet would I take farewell,  
May it not displease you, for old service' sake,  
Of one my servant here that was, and now  
Hath no word for me; yet I blame him not,  
Who am past all help of man; God witness me,  
I would not chide now, Gilbert, though my tongue  
Had strength yet left for chiding, and its edge  
Were yet a sword to smite with, or my wrath  
A thing that babes might shrink at; only this  
Take with you for your poor queen's true last word,  
That if they let me live so long to see  
The fair wife's face again from whose soft side,  
Now labouring with your child, by violent hands  
You are reft perforce for my sake, while I live  
I will have charge of her more carefully  
Than of mine own life's keeping, which indeed  
I think not long to keep, nor care, God knows,  
How soon or how men take it. Nay, good friend,  
Weep not; my weeping time is well-nigh past,  
And theirs whose eyes have too much wept for me



Should last no longer.  Sirs, I give you thanks  
For thus much grace and patience shown of you,  
My gentle gaolers, towards a queen unqueened  
Who shall nor get nor crave again of man  
What grace may rest in him to give her.  Come,  
Bring me to bonds again, and her with me  
That hath not stood so nigh me all these years  
To fall ere life doth from my side, or take  
Her way to death without me till I die.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.  
WALSINGHAM.

SCENE I.—*Windsor Castle.*

QUEEN ELIZABETH *and* SIR FRANCIS WALSINGHAM.

ELIZABETH. What will ye make me? Let the council  
know

I am yet their loving mistress, but they lay  
Too strange a burden on my love who send  
As to their servant word what ways to take,  
What sentence of my subjects given subscribe  
And in mine own name utter. Bid them wait;  
Have I not patience? and was never quick  
To teach my tongue the deadly word of death,  
Lest one day strange tongues blot my fame with blood;  
The red addition of my sister's name  
Shall brand not mine.

WALSINGHAM. God grant your mercy shown  
Mark not your memory like a martyr's red  
With pure imperial heart's-blood of your own  
Shed through your own sweet-spirited height of heart  
That held your hand from justice.

ELIZABETH. I would rather  
Stand in God's sight so signed with mine own blood

Than with a sister's—innocent; or indeed  
Though guilty—being a sister's—might I choose,  
As being a queen I may not surely—no—  
I may not choose, you tell me.

WALSINGHAM. Nay, no man  
Hath license of so large election given  
As once to choose, being servant called of God,  
If he will serve or no, or save the name  
And slack the service.

ELIZABETH. Yea, but in his Word  
I find no word that whets for king-killing  
The sword kings bear for justice; yet I doubt,  
Being drawn, it may not choose but strike at root—  
Being drawn to cut off treason. Walsingham,  
You are more a statesman than a gosseller;  
Take for your tongue's text now no text of God's,  
But what the devil has put into their lips  
Who should have slain me; nay, what by God's grace,  
Who bared their purpose to us, through pain or fear  
Hath been wrung thence of secrets writ in fire  
At bottom of their hearts. Have they confessed?

WALSINGHAM. The twain trapped first in London.

ELIZABETH. What, the priest?  
Their twice-turned Ballard, ha?

WALSINGHAM. Madam, not he.

ELIZABETH. God's blood! ye have spared not him  
the torment, knaves?  
Of all I would not spare him.

WALSINGHAM. Verily, no;  
The rack hath spun his life's thread out so fine  
There is but left for death to slit in twain  
*The thickness of a spider's.*

ELIZABETH.

Aye, still dumb?

WALSINGHAM. Dumb for all good the pains can get  
of him;

Had he drunk dry the chalice of his craft  
Brewed in design abhorred of even his friends  
With poisonous purpose toward your majesty,  
He had kept scarce harder silence.

ELIZABETH.

Poison? aye—

That should be still the churchman's household sword  
Or saintly staff to bruise crowned heads from far  
And break them with his precious balms that smell  
Rank as the jaws of death, or festal fume  
When Rome yet reeked with Borgia; but the rest  
Had grace enow to grant me for goodwill  
Some death more gracious than a rat's? God wot,  
I am bounden to them, and will charge for this  
The hangman thank them heartily; they shall not  
Lack daylight means to die by. God, meseems,  
Will have me not die darkling like a dog,  
Who hath kept my lips from poison and my heart  
From shot of English knave or Spanish, both  
Dubbed of the devil or damned his doctors, whom  
My riddance from all ills that plague man's life  
Should have made great in record; and for wage  
Your Ballard hath not better hap to fee  
Than Lopez had or Parry. Well, he lies.  
As dumb in bonds as those dead dogs in earth,  
You say, but of his fellows newly ta'en  
There are that keep not silence: what say these?  
Pour in mine ears the poison of their plot  
Whose fangs have stung the silly snakes to death.  
WALSINGHAM. The first a soldier, Savage, in these wars

That sometime serving sought a traitor's luck  
Under the prince Farnese, then of late  
At Rheims was tempted of our traitors there,  
Of one in chief, Gifford the seminarist,  
My smock-faced spy's good uncle, to take off  
Or the earl of Leicester or your gracious self;  
And since his passage hither, to confirm  
His hollow-hearted hardihood, hath had  
Word from this doctor more solicitous yet  
Sent by my knave his nephew, who of late  
Was in the seminary of so deadly seed  
Their reader in philosophy, that their head,  
Even Cardinal Allen, holds for just and good  
The purpose laid upon his hand; this man  
Makes yet more large confession than of this,  
Saying from our Gilbert's trusty mouth he had  
Assurance that in Italy the Pope  
Hath levies raised against us, to set forth  
For seeming succour toward the Parmesan,  
But in their actual aim bent hither, where  
With French and Spaniards in one front of war  
They might make in upon us; but from France  
No foot shall pass for inroad on our peace  
Till—so they phrase it—by these Catholics here  
Your majesty be taken, or——

ELIZABETH.

No more—

But only taken? springed but bird-like? Ha!  
They are something tender of our poor personal chance—  
Temperately tender: yet I doubt the springe  
Had haply maimed me no less deep than life  
Sits next the heart most mortal. Or—so be it  
*I slip the springe—what yet may shackle France,*

Hang weights upon their purpose who should else  
Be great of heart against us? They take time  
Till I be taken—or till what signal else  
As favourable?

WALSINGHAM. Till she they serve be brought  
Safe out of Paulet's keeping.

ELIZABETH. Aye? they know him  
So much my servant, and his guard so good,  
That sound of strange feet marching on our soil  
Against us in his prisoner's name perchance  
Might from the walls wherein she sits his guest  
Raise a funereal echo? Yet I think  
He would not dare—what think'st thou might he dare  
Without my word for warrant? If I knew  
This——

WALSINGHAM. It should profit not your grace to  
know

What may not be conceivable for truth  
Without some stain on honour.

ELIZABETH. Nay, I say not  
That I would have him take upon his hand  
More than his trust may warrant: yet have men,  
Good men, for very truth of their good hearts  
Put loyal hand to work as perilous—well,  
God wot I would not have him so transgress—  
If such be called transgressors.

WALSINGHAM. Let the queen  
Rest well assured he shall not. So far forth  
Our swordsman Savage witnesses of these  
That moved him toward your murder but in trust  
Thereby to bring invasion over sea:  
Which one more gently natured of his birth,

Tichborne, protests with very show of truth  
That he would give no ear to, knowing, he saith,  
The miseries of such conquest: nor, it seems,  
Heard this man aught of murderous purpose bent  
Against your highness.

ELIZABETH. Naught? why then, again,  
To him I am yet more bounden, who may think,  
Being found but half my traitor, at my hands  
To find but half a hangman.

WALSINGHAM. Nay, the man  
Herein seems all but half his own man, being  
Made merely out of stranger hearts and brains  
Their engine of conspiracy; for thus  
Forsooth he pleads, that Babington his friend  
First showed him how himself was wrought upon  
By one man's counsel and persuasion, one  
Held of great judgment, Ballard, on whose head  
All these lay all their forfeit.

ELIZABETH. Yet shall each  
Pay for himself red coin of ransom down  
In costlier drops than gold is. But of these  
Why take we thought? their natural-subject blood  
Can wash not out their sanguine-sealed attempt,  
Nor leave us marked as tyrant: only she  
That is the head and heart of all your fears  
Whose hope or fear is England's, quick or dead,  
Leaves or imperilled or impeached of blood  
Me that with all but hazard of mine own,  
God knows, would yet redeem her. I will write  
With mine own hand to her privily,—what else?—  
Saying, if by word as privy from her hand  
*She will confess her treasonous practices,*

They shall be wrapped in silence up, and she  
By judgment live unscathed.

WALSINGHAM.                      Being that she is,  
So surely will she deem of your great grace,  
And see it but as a snare set wide, or net  
Spread in the bird's sight vainly.

ELIZABETH.                      Why, then, well:  
She, casting off my grace, from all men's grace  
Cuts off herself, and even aloud avows  
By silence and suspect of jealous heart  
Her manifest foul conscience: on which proof  
I will proclaim her to the parliament  
So self-convicted. Yet I would not have  
Her name and life by mortal evidence  
Touched at the trial of them that now shall die  
Or by their charge attainted: lest myself  
Fall in more peril of her friends than she  
Stands yet in shot of judgment.

WALSINGHAM.                      Be assured,  
Madam, the process of their treasons judged  
Shall tax not her before her trial-time  
With public note of clear complicity  
Even for that danger's sake which moves you.

ELIZABETH.                      Me  
So much it moves not for my mere life's sake  
Which I would never buy with fear of death  
As for the general danger's and the shame's  
Thence cast on queenship and on womanhood  
By mean of such a murderess. But, for them,  
I would the merited manner of their death  
Might for more note of terror be referred  
To me and to my council: these at least



Shall hang for warning in the world's wide eye  
More high than common traitors, with more pains  
Being ravished forth of their more villainous lives  
Than feed the general throat of justice. Her  
Shall this too touch, whom none that serves henceforth  
But shall be sure of hire more terrible  
Than all past wage of treason.

WALSINGHAM.

Why, so far

As law gives leave——

ELIZABETH.

What prat'st thou me of law?

God's blood! is law for man's sake made, or man  
For law's sake only, to be held in bonds,  
Led lovingly like hound in huntsman's leash  
Or child by finger, not for help or stay,  
But hurt and hindrance? Is not all this land  
And all its hope and surety given to time  
Of sovereignty and freedom, all the fame  
And all the fruit of manhood hence to be,  
More than one rag or relic of its law  
Wherewith all these lie shackled? as too sure  
Have states no less than ours been done to death  
With gentle counsel and soft-handed rule  
For fear to snap one thread of ordinance  
Though thence the state were strangled.

WALSINGHAM.

Madam, yet

There need no need be here of law's least breach,  
That of all else is worst necessity—  
Being such a mortal medicine to the state  
As poison drunk to expel a feverish taint  
Which air or sleep might purge as easily.

ELIZABETH. Aye, but if air be poison-struck with  
plague

Or sleep to death lie palsied, fools were they,  
Faint hearts and faithless, who for health's fair sake  
Should fear to cleanse air, pierce and probe the trance  
With purging fire or iron. Have your way.  
God send good end of all this, and procure  
Some mean whereby mine enemies' craft and his  
May take no feet but theirs in their own toils,  
And no blood shed be innocent as mine.

SCENE II.—*Chartley.*

MARY BEATON *and* SIR AMYAS PAULET.

PAULET. You should do well to bid her less be  
moved

Who needs fear less of evil. Since we came  
Again from Tixall this wild mood of hers  
Hath vexed her more than all men's enmities  
Should move a heart more constant. Verily,  
I thought she had held more rule upon herself  
Than to call out on beggars at the gate  
When she rode forth, crying she had nought to give,  
Being all as much a beggar too as they,  
With all things taken from her.

MARY BEATON. Being so served,  
In sooth she should not show nor shame nor spleen:  
It was but seventeen days ye held her there  
Away from all attendance, as in bonds  
Kept without change of raiment, and to find,  
Being thence haled hither again, no nobler use,  
But all her papers plundered—then her keys

By force of violent threat wrung from the hand  
She scarce could stir to help herself abed:  
These were no matters that should move her.

PAULET.

None,

If she be clean of conscience, whole of heart,  
Nor else than pure in purpose, but malign'd  
Of men's suspicions: how should one thus wrong'd  
But hold all hard chance good to approve her case  
Blameless, give praise for all, turn all to thanks  
That might unload her of so sore a charge,  
Despoiled not, but disburdened? Her great wrath  
Pleads hard against her, and itself spake loud  
Alone, ere other witness might unseal  
Wrath's fierce interpretation: which ere long  
Was of her secretaries expounded.

MARY BEATON.

Sir,

As you are honourable, and of equal heart  
Have shown such grace as man being manful may  
To such a piteous prisoner as desires  
Nought now but what may hurt not loyalty  
Though you comply therewith to comfort her,  
Let her not think your spirit so far incensed  
By wild words of her mistress cast on you  
In heat of heart and bitter fire of spleen  
That you should now close ears against a prayer  
Which else might fairly find them open.

PAULET.

Speak

More short and plainly: what I well may grant  
Shall so seem easiest granted.

MARY BEATON.

There should be

No cause I think to seal your lips up, though  
*I crave of them but so much breath as may*

Give mine ear knowledge of the witness borne  
 (If aught of witness were against her borne)  
 By those her secretaries you spake of.

PAULET. This

With hard expostulation was drawn forth  
 At last of one and other, that they twain  
 Had writ by record from their lady's mouth  
 To Babington some letter which implies  
 Close conscience of his treason, and goodwill  
 To meet his service with complicity:  
 But one thing found therein of deadliest note  
 The Frenchman swore they set not down, nor she  
 Bade write one word of favour nor assent  
 Answering this murderous motion toward our queen:  
 Only, saith he, she held herself not bound  
 For love's sake to reveal it, and thereby  
 For love of enemies do to death such friends  
 As only for her own love's sake were found  
 Fit men for murderous treason: and so much  
 Her own hand's transcript of the word she sent  
 Should once produced bear witness of her.

MARY BEATON.

Aye?

How then came this withholden?

PAULET.

If she speak

But truth, why, truth should sure be manifest,  
 And shall, with God's good will, to good men's joy  
 That wish not evil: as at Fotheringay  
 When she shall come to trial must be tried  
 If it be truth or no: for which assay  
 You shall do toward her well and faithfully  
 To bid her presently prepare her soul  
 That it may there make answer.

MARY BEATON.

Presently?

PAULET. Upon the arraignment of her friends who  
stand

As 'twere at point of execution now  
Ere sentence pass upon them of their sin.  
Would you no more with me?

MARY BEATON.

I am bounden to you

For thus much tidings granted.

PAULET.

So farewell. [*Exit.*]

MARY BEATON. So fare I well or ill as one who  
knows

He shall not fare much further toward his end.  
Here looms on me the landmark of my life  
That I have looked for now some score of years  
Even with long-suffering eagerness of heart  
And a most hungry patience. I did know,  
Yea, God, thou knowest I knew this all that while,  
From that day forth when even these eyes beheld  
Fall the most faithful head in all the world,  
Toward her most loving and of me most loved,  
By doom of hers that was so loved of him  
He could not love me nor his life at all  
Nor his own soul nor aught that all men love,  
Nor could fear death nor very God, or care  
If there were aught more merciful in heaven  
Than love on earth had been to him. Chastelard  
I have not had the name upon my lips  
That stands for sign of love the truest in man  
Since first love made him sacrifice of men,  
This long sad score of years retributive  
Since it was cast out of her heart and mind  
*Who made it mean a dead thing; nor, I think,*

Will she remember it before she die  
More than in France the memories of old friends  
Are like to have yet forgotten; but for me,  
Haply thou knowest, so death not all be death,  
If all these years I have had not in my mind  
Through all these chances this one thought in all,  
That I shall never leave her till she die.  
Nor surely now shall I much longer serve  
Who fain would lie down at her foot and sleep,  
Fain, fain have done with waking. Yet my soul  
Knows, and yet God knows, I would set not hand  
To such a work as might put on the time  
And make death's foot more forward for her sake:  
Yea, were it to deliver mine own soul  
From bondage and long-suffering of my life,  
I would not set mine hand to work her wrong.  
Tempted I was—but hath God need of me  
To work his judgment, bring his time about,  
Approve his justice if the word be just  
That whoso doeth shall suffer his own deed,  
Bear his own blow, to weep tears back for tears,  
And bleed for bloodshed? God should spare me this  
That once I held the one good hope on earth,  
To be the mean and engine of her end  
Or some least part at least therein: I prayed,  
God, give me so much grace—who now should pray,  
Tempt me not, God. My heart swelled once to know  
I bore her death about me; as I think  
Indeed I bear it: but what need hath God  
That I should clench his doom with craft of mine?  
What needs the wrath of hot Elizabeth  
Be blown aflame with mere past writing read,

Which hath to enkindle it higher already proof  
Of present practice on her state and life?  
Shall fear of death or love of England fail  
Or memory faint or foresight fall stark blind,  
That there should need the whet and spur of shame  
To turn her spirit into some chafing snake's  
And make its fang more feared for mortal? Yet  
I am glad, and I repent me not, to know  
I have the writing in my bosom sealed  
That bears such matter with her own hand signed  
As she that yet repents her not to have writ  
Repents her not that she refrained to send  
And fears not but long since it felt the fire—  
Being fire itself to burn her, yet unquenched,  
But in my hand here covered harmless up  
Which had in charge to burn it. What perchance  
Might then the reading of it have wrought for us,  
If all this fiery poison of her scoffs  
Making the foul froth of a serpent's tongue  
More venomous, and more deadly toward her queen  
Even Bess of Hardwick's bitterest babbling tales,  
Had touched at heart the Tudor vein indeed?  
Enough it yet were surely, though that vein  
Were now the gentlest that such hearts may hold  
And all doubt's trembling balance that way bent,  
To turn as with one mortal grain cast in  
The scale of grace against her life that writ  
And weigh down pity deathward.

*Enter MARY STUART.*

MARY STUART.                      Have we found  
Such kindness of our keeper as may give  
*Some ease from expectation? or must hope*

Still fret for ignorance how long here we stay  
As men abiding judgment?

MARY BEATON.                      Now not long,  
He tells me, need we think to tarry; since  
The time and place of trial are set, next month  
To hold it in the castle of Fotheringay.

MARY STUART. Why, he knows well I were full  
easily moved  
To set forth hence; there must I find more scope  
To commune with the ambassador of France  
By letter thence to London: but, God help,  
Think these folk truly, doth she verily think,  
What never man durst yet nor woman dreamed,  
May one that is nor man nor woman think,  
To bring a queen born subject of no laws  
Here in subjection of an alien law  
By foreign force of judgment? Were she wise,  
Might she not have me privily made away?  
And being nor wise nor valiant but of tongue,  
Could she find yet foolhardiness of heart  
Enough to attain the rule of royal rights  
With murderous madness? I will think not this  
Till it be proven indeed.

MARY BEATON.                      A month come round,  
This man protests, will prove it.

MARY STUART.                      Aye! protests?  
What protestation of what Protestant  
Can unmake law that was of God's mouth made,  
Unwrite the writing of the world, unsay  
The general saying of ages? If I go,  
Compelled of God's hand or constrained of man's,  
Yet God shall bid me not nor man enforce



My tongue to plead before them for my life.  
I had rather end as kings before me, die  
Rather by shot or stroke of murderous hands,  
Than so make answer once in face of man  
As one brought forth to judgment. Are they mad,  
And she most mad for envious heart of all,  
To make so mean account of me? Methought,  
When late we came back hither soiled and spent  
And sick with travel, I had seen their worst of wrong  
Full-faced, with its most outrage: when I found  
My servant Curle's young new-delivered wife  
Without priest's comfort and her babe unblessed  
A nameless piteous thing born ere its time,  
And took it from the mother's arms abed  
And bade her have good comfort, since myself  
Would take all charge against her husband laid  
On mine own head to answer; deeming not  
Man ever durst bid answer for myself  
On charge as mortal: and mine almoner gone,  
Did I not crave of Paulet for a grace  
His chaplain might baptise me this poor babe,  
And was denied it, and with mine own hands  
For shame and charity moved to christen her  
There with scant ritual in his heretic sight  
By mine own woful name, whence God, I pray,  
For her take off its presage? I misdeemed,  
Who deemed all these and yet far more than these  
For one born queen indignities enough,  
On one crowned head enough of buffets: more  
Hath time's hand laid upon me: yet I keep  
Faith in one word I spake to Paulet, saying  
*Two things* were mine though I stood spoiled of all

As of my letters and my privy coin  
By pickpurse hands of office: these things yet  
Might none take thievish hold upon to strip  
His prisoner naked of her natural dower,  
The blood yet royal running here unspilled  
And that religion which I think to keep  
Fast as this royal blood until I die.  
So where at last and howsoe'er I fare  
I need not much take thought, nor thou for love  
Take of thy mistress pity; yet meseems  
They dare not work their open will on me:  
But God's it is that shall be done, and I  
Find end of all in quiet. I would sleep  
On this strange news of thine, that being awake  
I may the freshlier front my sense thereof  
And thought of life or death. Come in with me.

SCENE III. — *Tyburn.*

*A Crowd of Citizens.*

1ST CITIZEN. Is not their hour yet on? Men say  
the queen

Bade spare no jot of torment in their end  
That law might lay upon them.

2ND CITIZEN. Truth it is,  
To spare what scourge soe'er man's justice may  
Twist for such caitiff traitors were to grieve  
God's with mere inobservance. Hear you not  
How yet the loud lewd braggarts of their side  
Keep heart to threaten that for all this foil

They are not foiled indeed, but yet the work  
Shall prosper with deliverance of their queen  
And death for her of ours, though they should give  
Of their own lives for one an hundredfold?

3RD CITIZEN. These are bold mouths; one that  
shall die to-day,  
Being this last week arraigned at Westminster,  
Had no such heart, they say, to his defence,  
Who was the main head of their treasons.

1ST CITIZEN. Aye,  
And yesterday, if truth belie not him,  
Durst with his doomed hand write some word of prayer  
To the queen's self, her very grace, to crave  
Grace of her for his gracelessness, that she  
Might work on one too tainted to deserve  
A miracle of compassion, whence her fame  
For pity of sins too great for pity of man  
Might shine more glorious than his crime showed foul  
In the eye of such a mercy.

2ND CITIZEN. Yet men said  
He spake at his arraignment soberly  
With clear mild looks and gracious gesture, showing  
The purport of his treasons in such wise  
That it seemed pity of him to hear them, how  
All their beginnings and proceedings had  
First head and fountain only for their spring  
From ill persuasions of that poisonous priest  
Who stood the guiltiest near; by this man's side  
Approved a valiant villain. Barnwell next,  
Who came but late from Ireland here to court,  
Made simply protestation of design  
*To work no personal ill against the queen*

Nor paint rebellion's face as murder's red  
With blood imperial: Tichborne then avowed  
He knew the secret of their aim, and kept,  
And held forsooth himself no traitor; yet  
In the end would even plead guilty, Donne with him,  
And Salisbury, who not less professed he still  
Stood out against the killing of the queen,  
And would not hurt her for a kingdom: so,  
When thus all these had pleaded, one by one  
Was each man bid say fairly, for his part,  
Why sentence should not pass: and Ballard first,  
Who had been so sorely racked he might not stand,  
Spake, but as seems to none effect: of whom  
Said Babington again, he set them on,  
He first, and most of all him, who believed  
This priest had power to assoil his soul alive  
Of all else mortal treason: Ballard then,  
As in sad scorn—*Yea, Master Babington,*  
*Quoth he, lay all upon me, but I wish*  
*For you the shedding of my blood might be*  
*The saving of your life: howbeit, for that,*  
*Say what you will; and I will say no more.*  
Nor spake the swordsman Savage aught again,  
Who, first arraigned, had first avowed his cause  
Guilty: nor yet spake Tichborne aught: but Donne  
Spake, and the same said Barnwell, each had sinned  
For very conscience only: Salisbury last  
Besought the queen remission of his guilt.  
Then spake Sir Christopher Hatton for the rest  
That sat with him commissioners, and showed  
How by dark doctrine of the seminaries  
And instance most of Ballard had been brought.

To extreme destruction here of body and soul  
A sort of brave youths otherwise endowed  
With goodly gifts of birthright: and in fine  
There was the sentence given that here even now  
Shows seven for dead men in our present sight  
And shall bring six to-morrow forth to die.

*Enter BABINGTON, BALLARD (carried in a chair), TICH-  
BORNE, SAVAGE, BARNWELL, TILNEY, and ABINGTON,  
guarded: Sheriff, Executioner, Chaplain, &c.*

1ST CITIZEN. What, will they speak?

2ND CITIZEN. Aye; each hath leave in turn  
To show what mood he dies in toward his cause.

BALLARD. Sirs, ye that stand to see us take our  
doom,

I being here given this grace to speak to you  
Have but my word to witness for my soul,  
That all I have done and all designed to do  
Was only for advancement of true faith  
To furtherance of religion: for myself  
Aught would I never, but for Christ's dear church  
Was mine intent all wholly, to redeem  
Her sore affliction in this age and land,  
As now may not be yet: which knowing for truth,  
I am readier even at heart to die than live.  
And dying I crave of all men pardon whom  
My doings at all have touched, or who thereat  
Take scandal; and forgiveness of the queen  
If on this cause I have offended her.

SAVAGE. The like say I, that have no skill in  
speech,  
*But heart enough with faith at heart to die,*

Seeing but for conscience and the common good,  
And no preferment but this general weal,  
I did attempt this business.

BARNWELL. I confess  
That I, whose seed was of that hallowed earth  
Whereof each pore hath sweated blood for Christ,  
Had note of these men's drifts, which I deny  
That ever I consented with or could  
In conscience hold for lawful. That I came  
To spy for them occasions in the court  
And there being noted of her majesty  
She seeing mine eyes peer sharply like a man's  
That had such purpose as she wist before  
Prayed God that all were well—if this were urged,  
I might make answer, it was not unknown  
To divers of the council that I there  
Had matters to solicit of mine own  
Which thither drew me then: yet I confess  
That Babington, espying me thence returned,  
Asked me what news: to whom again I told,  
Her majesty had been abroad that day,  
With all the circumstance I saw there. Now  
If I have done her majesty offence  
I crave her pardon: and assuredly  
If this my body's sacrifice might yet  
Establish her in true religion, here  
Most willingly should this be offered up.

TILNEY. I came not here to reason of my faith,  
But to die simply like a Catholic, praying  
Christ give our queen Elizabeth long life,  
And warning all youth born take heed by me.

ABINGTON. I likewise, and if aught I have erred in  
aught

I crave but pardon as for ignorant sin,  
Holding at all points firm the Catholic faith;  
And all things charged against me I confess,  
Save that I ever sought her highness' death:  
In whose poor kingdom yet ere long I fear  
Will be great bloodshed.

SHERIFF.

Seest thou, Abington,

Here all these people present of thy kind  
Whose blood shall be demanded at thy hands  
If dying thou hide what might endanger them?  
Speak therefore, why or by what mortal mean  
Should there be shed such blood?

ABINGTON.

All that I know

You have on record: take but this for sure,  
This country lives for its iniquity  
Loathed of all countries, and God loves it not.  
Whereon I pray you trouble me no more  
With questions of this world, but let me pray  
And in mine own wise make my peace with God.

BABINGTON. For me, first head of all this enterprise,  
I needs must make this record of myself,  
I have not conspired for profit, but in trust  
Of men's persuasions whence I stood assured  
This work was lawful which I should have done  
And meritorious as toward God; for which  
No less I crave forgiveness of my queen  
And that my brother may possess my lands  
In heritage else forfeit with my head.

TICHBORNE. Good countrymen and my dear friends,  
you look

For something to be said of me, that am  
But an ill orator; and my text is worse.  
Vain were it to make full discourse of all  
This cause that brings me hither, which before  
Was all made bare, and is well known to most  
That have their eyes upon me: let me stand  
For all young men, and most for those born high,  
Their present warning here: a friend I had,  
Aye, and a dear friend, one of whom I made  
No small account, whose friendship for pure love  
To this hath brought me: I may not deny  
He told me all the matter, how set down,  
And ready to be wrought; which always I  
Held impious, and denied to deal therein:  
But only for my friend's regard was I  
Silent, and verified a saying in me,  
Who so consented to him. Ere this thing chanced,  
How brotherly we twain lived heart in heart  
Together, in what flourishing estate,  
This town well knows: of whom went all report  
Through her loud length of Fleetstreet and the Strand  
And all parts else that sound men's fortunate names,  
But Babington and Tichborne? that therein  
There was no haughtiest threshold fount of force  
To brave our entry; thus we lived our life,  
And wanted nothing we might wish for: then,  
For me, what less was in my head, God knows,  
Than high state matters? Give me now but leave  
Scarce to declare the miseries I sustained  
Since I took knowledge of this action, whence  
To his estate I well may liken mine,  
Who could forbear not one forbidden thing



To enjoy all else afforded of the world:  
The terror of my conscience hung on me;  
Who, taking heed what perils girt me, went  
To Sir John Peters hence in Essex, there  
Appointing that my horses by his mean  
Should meet me here in London, whence I thought  
To flee into the country: but being here  
I heard how all was now bewrayed abroad:  
Whence Adam-like we fled into the woods  
And there were taken. My dear countrymen,  
Albeit my sorrows well may be your joy,  
Yet mix your smiles with tears: pity my case,  
Who, born out of an house whose name descends  
Even from two hundred years ere English earth  
Felt Norman heel upon her, were it yet  
Till this mishap of mine unspotted. Sirs,  
I have a wife, and one sweet child: my wife,  
My dear wife Agnes: and my grief is there;  
And for six sisters too left on my hand:  
All my poor servants were dispersed, I know,  
Upon their master's capture: all which things  
Most heartily I sorrow for: and though  
Nought might I less have merited at her hands,  
Yet had I looked for pardon of my fault  
From the queen's absolute grace and clemency;  
That the unexpired remainder of my years  
Might in some sort have haply recompensed  
This former guilt of mine whereof I die:  
But seeing such fault may find not such release  
Even of her utter mercies, heartily  
I crave at least of her and all the world  
*Forgiveness, and to God commend my soul,*

And to men's memory this my penitence  
Till our death's record die from out the land.

1ST CITIZEN. God pardon him! Stand back: what  
ail these knaves

To drive and thrust upon us? Help me, sir;  
I thank you: hence we take them full in view:  
Hath yet the hangman there his knife in hand?

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.  
BURGHLEY.

SCENE I.—*The Presence-Chamber in Fotheringay Castle.*  
*At the upper end, a chair of state as for QUEEN ELIZABETH; opposite, in the centre of the hall, a chair for MARY STUART. The Commissioners seated on either side along the wall: to the right, the Earls, with LORD CHANCELLOR BROMLEY and LORD TREASURER BURGHLEY; to the left, the Barons, with the Knights of the Privy Council, among them WALSINGHAM and PAULET; POPHAM, EGERTON, and GAWDY, as Counsel for the Crown. Enter MARY STUART, supported by SIR ANDREW MELVILLE, and takes her place.*

MARY STUART. Here are full many men of counsel met;

Not one for me. [*The Chancellor rises.*]

BROMLEY. Madam, this court is held  
To make strait inquisition as by law  
Of what with grief of heart our queen has heard,  
A plot upon her life, against the faith  
Here in her kingdom stablished: on which cause  
Our charge it is to exact your answer here  
*And put to proof your guilt or innocence.*

MARY STUART (*rising*).   Sirs, whom by strange constraint I stand before,  
My lords, and not my judges, since no law  
Can hold to mortal judgment answerable  
A princess free-born of all courts on earth,  
I rise not here to make response as one  
Responsible toward any for my life  
Or of mine acts accountable to man,  
Who see none higher save only God in heaven:  
I am no natural subject of your land  
That I should here plead as a criminal charged,  
Nor in such wise appear I now: I came  
On your queen's faith to seek in England help  
By trothplight pledged me: where by promise-breach  
I am even since then her prisoner held in ward:  
Yet, understanding by report of you  
Some certain things I know not of to be  
Against me brought on record, by my will  
I stand content to hear and answer these.

BROMLEY.   Madam, there lives none born on earth  
                  so high  
Who for this land's laws' breach within this land  
Shall not stand answerable before those laws.

BURGHLEY.   Let there be record of the prisoner's  
                  plea  
And answer given such protest here set down,  
And so proceed we to this present charge.

GAWDY.   My lords, to unfold by length of circumstance  
The model of this whole conspiracy  
Should lay the pattern of all treasons bare  
That ever brought high state in danger: this

No man there lives among us but hath heard,  
How certain men of our queen's household folk  
Being wrought on by persuasion of their priests  
Drew late a bond between them, binding these  
With others of their faith accomplices  
Directed first of Anthony Babington  
By mean of six for execution chosen  
To slay the queen their mistress, and thereon  
Make all her trustiest men of trust away;  
As my lord treasurer Burghley present here,  
Lord Hunsdon, and Sir Francis Walsingham,  
And one that held in charge awhile agone  
This lady now on trial, Sir Francis Knowles.  
That she was hereto privy, to her power  
Approving and abetting their device,  
It shall not stand us in much need to show  
Whose proofs are manifoldly manifest  
On record written of their hands and hers.

MARY STUART. Of all this I know nothing: Babington

I have used for mine intelligencer, sent  
With letters charged at need, but never yet  
Spake with him, never writ him word of mine  
As privy to these close conspiracies  
Nor word of his had from him. Never came  
One harmful thought upon me toward your queen,  
Nor knowledge ever that of other hearts  
Was harm designed against her. Proofs, ye say,  
Forsooth ye hold to impeach me: I desire  
But only to behold and handle them  
If they in sooth of sense be tangible  
*More than mere air and shadow.*

BURGHLEY. Let the clerk  
Produce those letters writ from Babington.  
MARY STUART. What then? it may be such were  
writ of him:

Be it proved that they came ever in my hands.  
If Babington affirm so much, I say  
He, or who else will say it, lies openly.

GAWDY. Here is the man's confession writ, and  
here  
Ballard's the Jesuit, and the soldier's here,  
Savage, that served with Parma.

MARY STUART. What of these?  
Traitors they were, and traitor-like they lied.

GAWDY. And here the last her letter of response  
Confirming and approving in each point  
Their purpose, writ direct to Babington.

MARY STUART. My letter? none of mine it is: per-  
chance  
It may be in my cipher charactered,  
But never came from or my tongue or hand:  
I have sought mine own deliverance, and thereto  
Solicited of my friends their natural help:  
Yet certain whom I list not name there were,  
Whose offers made of help to set me free  
Receiving, yet I answered not a word.  
Howbeit, desiring to divert the storm  
Of persecution from the church, for this  
To your queen's grace I have made most earnest suit:  
But for mine own part I would purchase not  
This kingdom with the meanest one man's death  
In all its commonalty, much less the queen's.  
Many there be have dangerously designed

*Chastelard and Mary Stuart.*

Things that I knew not: yea, but very late  
There came a letter to my hand which craved  
My pardon if by enterprise of some  
Were undertaken aught unknown of me:  
A cipher lightly may one counterfeit,  
As he that vaunted him of late in France  
To be my son's base brother: and I fear  
Lest this, for aught mine ignorance of it knows,  
May be that secretary's fair handiwork  
Who sits to judge me, and hath practised late,  
I hear, against my son's life and mine own.  
But I protest I have not so much as thought  
Nor dreamed upon destruction of the queen:  
I had rather spend most gladly mine own life  
Than for my sake the Catholics should be thus  
Afflicted only in very hate of me  
And drawn to death so cruel as these tears  
Gush newly forth to think of.

BURGHLEY.

Here no man

Who hath showed himself true subject to the state  
Was ever for religion done to death:  
But some for treason, that against the queen  
Upheld the pope's bull and authority.

MARY STUART. Yet have I heard it otherwise affirmed  
And read in books set forth in print as much.

BURGHLEY. They that so write say too the queen  
hath here

Made forfeit of her royal dignity.

WALSINGHAM. Here I call God to record on my part  
That personally or as a private man  
I have done nought misbecoming honesty,  
Nor as I bear a public person's place

Done aught thereof unworthy. I confess  
 That, being right careful of the queen's estate  
 And safety of this realm, I have curiously  
 Searched out the practices against it: nay,  
 Herein had Ballard offered me his help,  
 I durst not have denied him; yea, I would  
 Have recompensed the pains he had taken. Say  
 I have practised aught with him, why did he not,  
 To save his life, reveal it?

MARY STUART. Pray you, sir,  
 Take no displeasure at me: truth it is  
 Report has found me of your dealings, blown  
 From lip to ear abroad, wherein myself  
 I put no credit: and could but desire  
 Yourself would all as little make account  
 Of slanders flung on me. Spies, sure, are men  
 Of doubtful credit, which dissemble things  
 Far other than they speak. Do not believe  
 That I gave ever or could give consent  
 Once to the queen's destruction: I would never,  
 These tears are bitter witness, never would  
 Make shipwreck of my soul by compassing  
 Destruction of my dearest sister.

GAWDY. This  
 Shall soon by witness be disproved: as here  
 Even by this letter from Charles Paget's hand  
 Transcribed, which Curle your secretary hath borne  
 Plain witness you received, touching a league  
 Betwixt Mendoza and Ballard, who conferred  
 Of this land's foreordained invasion, thence  
 To give you freedom.

MARY STUART. What of this? ye shoot



Wide of the purpose: this approves not me  
Consenting to the queen's destruction.

GAWDY.

That

Stands proven enough by word of Babington  
Who dying avowed it, and by letters passed  
From him to you, whom he therein acclaims  
As his most dread and sovereign lady and queen,  
And by the way makes mention passingly  
Of a plot laid by transference to convey  
This kingdom to the Spaniard.

MARY STUART.

I confess

There came a priest unto me, saying if I  
Would not herein bear part I with my son  
Alike should be debarred the inheritance:  
His name ye shall not have of me: but this  
Ye know, that openly the Spaniard lays  
Claim to your kingdom, and to none will give  
Place ever save to me.

BURGHLEY.

Still stands the charge

On written witness of your secretaries  
Great on all points against you.

MARY STUART.

Wherefore then

Are not these writers with these writings brought  
To outface me front to front? For Gilbert Curle,  
He is in the Frenchman's hands a waxen toy,  
Whom the other, once mine uncle's secretary,  
The cardinal's of Lorraine, at his mere will  
Moulds, turns, and tempers: being himself a knave  
That may be hired or scared with peril or coin  
To swear what thing men bid him. Truth again  
Is this that I deny not, seeing myself  
*Against all right held fast in English ward,*

I have sought all help where I might hope to find:

Which thing that I dispute not, let this be  
The sign that I disclaim no jot of truth  
In all objected to me. For the rest,  
All majesty that moves in all the world  
And all safe station of all princes born  
Fall, as things unrespected, to the ground,  
If on the testimony of secretaries  
And on their writings merely these depend,  
Being to their likeness thence debased: for me,  
Nought I delivered to them but what first  
Nature to me delivered, that I might  
Recover yet at length my liberty.  
I am not to be convicted save alone  
By mine own word or writing. If these men  
Have written toward the queen my sister's hurt  
Aught, I wist nought of all such writ at all:  
Let them be put to punishment: I am sure,  
Were these here present, they by testimony  
Would bring me clear of blame.

GAWDY.

Yet by their mean

They could not in excuse of you deny  
That letters of communion to and fro  
Have passed between you and the Spaniard, whence  
What should have come on England and the queen  
These both well know, and with what messages  
Were English exiles entertained of you  
By mean of these men, of your secretaries,  
Confirmed and cherished in conspiracy  
For this her kingdom's overthrow: in France  
Paget and Morgan, traitors in design.



MARY STUART. Nay,  
I have no kingdom left to assign, nor crown  
Whereof to make conveyance: yet is this  
But lawful, that of all things which are mine  
I may dispose at pleasure, and to none  
Stand on such count accountable.

BURGHLEY. So be it  
So far as may be: but your ciphers sent  
By Curle's plain testimony to Babington,  
To the lord Lodovic, and to Fernihurst,  
Once provost on your part in Edinburgh  
By mean of Grange your friend his father-in-law,  
Speak not but as with tongue imperial, nor  
Of import less than kingdoms.

MARY STUART. Surely, sir,  
Such have I writ, and many; nor therein  
Beyond my birth have trespassed, to commend  
That lord you speak of, and another, both  
My friends in faith, to a cardinal's dignity,  
And that, I trust, without offence: except  
It be not held as lawful on my part  
To commune with the chiefest of my creed  
By written word on matters of mine own  
As for your queen with churchfolk of her kind.

BURGHLEY. Well were it, madam, that with some of  
yours  
You had held less close communion: since by proof  
Reiterated from those your secretaries  
It seems you know right well that Morgan, who  
Sent Parry privily to despatch the queen,  
And have assigned him annual pension.

## MARY STUART.

**This**



Who tax me with unreason, that I sent  
Unjust conditions on my part to be  
To her propounded, which now many times  
Have alway found rejection? yea, when even  
For hostages I proffered in my stead  
To be delivered up with mine own son  
The duke of Guise's, both to stand in pledge  
That nor your queen nor kingdom should through me  
Take aught of damage; so that hence by proof  
I see myself utterly from all hope  
Already barred of freedom. But I now  
Am dealt with most unworthily, whose fame  
And honourable repute are called in doubt  
Before such foreign men of law as may  
By miserable conclusions of their craft  
Draw every thin and shallow circumstance  
Out into compass of a consequence:  
Whereas the anointed heads and consecrate  
Of princes are not subject to such laws  
As private men are. Next, whereas ye are given  
Authority but to look such matters through  
As tend to the hurt of your queen's person, yet  
Here is the cause so handled, and so far  
Here are my letters wrested, that the faith  
Which I profess, the immunity and state  
Of foreign princes, and their private right  
Of mutual speech by word reciprocate  
From royal hand to royal, all in one  
Are called in question, and myself by force  
Brought down beneath my kingly dignity  
And made to appear before a judgment-seat  
As one held guilty; to none end but this,

All to none other purpose but that I  
Might from all natural favour of the queen  
Be quite excluded, and my right cut off  
From claim hereditary: whereas I stand  
Here of mine own goodwill to clear myself  
Of all objected to me, lest I seem  
To have aught neglected in the full defence  
Of mine own innocency and honour. This  
Would I bring likewise in your minds, how once  
This queen herself of yours, Elizabeth,  
Was drawn in question of conspiracy  
That Wyatt raised against her sister, yet  
Ye know she was most innocent. For me,  
With very heart's religion I affirm,  
Though I desire the Catholics here might stand  
Assured of safety, this I would not yet  
Buy with the blood and death of anyone.  
And on mine own part rather would I play  
Esther than Judith; for the people's sake  
To God make intercession, than deprive  
The meanest of the people born of life.  
Mine enemies have made broad report aloud  
That I was irreligious: yet the time  
Has been I would have learnt the faith ye hold,  
But none would suffer me, for all I sought,  
To find such teaching at your teachers' hands;  
As though they cared not what my soul became.  
And now at last, when all ye can ye have done  
Against me, and have barred me from my right,  
Ye may chance fail yet of your cause and hope.  
To God and to the princes of my kin  
*I make again appeal, from you again*

Record my protestation, and reject  
All judgment of your court: I had rather die  
Thus undishonoured, even a thousand deaths,  
Than so bring down the height of majesty;  
Yea, and thereby confess myself as bound  
By all the laws of England, even in faith  
Of things religious, who could never learn  
What manner of laws these were: I am destitute  
Of counsellors, and who shall be my peers  
To judge my cause through and give doom thereon  
I am ignorant wholly, being an absolute queen,  
And will do nought which may impair that state  
In me nor other princes, nor my son;  
Since yet my mind is not dejected, nor  
Will I sink under my calamity.  
My notes are taken from me, and no man  
Dares but step forth to be my advocate.  
I am clear from all crime done against the queen,  
I have stirred not up one man against her: yet,  
Albeit of many dangers overpast  
I have thoroughly forewarned her, still I found  
No credit, but have always been contemned,  
Though nearest to her in blood allied. When late  
Ye made association, and thereon  
An act against their lives on whose behalf,  
Though innocent even as ignorance of it, aught  
Might be contrived to endangering of the queen  
From foreign force abroad, or privy plots  
At home of close rebellion, I foresaw  
That, whatsoever of peril so might rise  
Or more than all this for religion's sake,  
My many mortal enemies in her court



Should lay upon me all the charge, and I  
Bear the whole blame of all men. Certainly,  
I well might take it hardly, nor without  
High cause, that such confederacy was made  
With mine own son, and I not knowing: but this  
I speak not of, being not so grieved thereat  
As that mine own dear sister, that the queen,  
Is misinformed of me, and I, now kept  
These many years in so strait prison, and grown  
Lame of my limbs, have lien neglected, nor  
For all most reasonable conditions made  
Or proffered to redeem my liberty  
Found audience or acceptance: and at last  
Here am I set with none to plead for me.  
But this I pray, that on this matter of mine  
Another meeting there be kept, and I  
Be granted on my part an advocate  
To hold my cause up; or that seeing ye know  
I am a princess, I may be believed  
By mine own word, being princely: for should I  
Stand to your judgment, who most plainly I see  
Are armed against me strong in prejudice,  
It were mine extreme folly: more than this,  
That ever I came to England in such trust  
As of the plighted friendship of your queen  
And comfort of her promise. Look, my lords,  
Here on this ring: her pledge of love was this  
And surety sent me when I lay in bonds  
Of mine own rebels once: regard it well:  
In trust of this I came amongst you: none  
But sees what faith I have found to keep this trust.

*BURGHLEY.* Whereas I bear a double person, being

Commissioner first, then counsellor in this cause,  
From me as from the queen's commissioner here  
Receive a few words first. Your protest made  
Is now on record, and a transcript of it  
Shall be delivered you. To us is given  
Under the queen's hand our authority, whence  
Is no appeal, this grant being ratified  
With the great seal of England; nor are we  
With prejudice come hither, but to judge  
By the straight rule of justice. On their part,  
These the queen's learned counsel here in place  
Do level at nothing else but that the truth  
May come to light, how far you have made offence  
Against the person of the queen. To us  
Full power is given to hear and diligently  
Examine all the matter, though yourself  
Were absent: yet for this did we desire  
To have your presence here, lest we might seem  
To have derogated from your honour: nor  
Designed to object against you anything  
But what you knew of, or took part therein,  
Against the queen's life bent. For this were these  
Your letters brought in question, but to unfold  
Your aim against her person, and therewith  
All matters to it belonging; which perforce  
Are so with other matters interlaced  
As none may sever them. Hence was there need  
Set all these forth, not parcels here and there,  
Whose circumstances do the assurance give  
Upon what points you dealt with Babington.

MARY STUART. The circumstances haply may find  
proof,

Whereto your own words witness, saying if this  
Were blown abroad your cause were utterly  
Lost in all hearts of English friends. Therein  
Your thoughts hit right: for here in all men's minds  
That are not mad with envying at the truth  
Death were no loathlier than a stranger king.  
If you would any more, speak: if not aught,  
This cause is ended.

MARY STUART. I require again  
Before a full and open parliament  
Hearing, or speech in person with the queen,  
Who shall, I hope, have of a queen regard,  
And with the council. So, in trust hereof,  
I crave a word with some of you apart,  
And of this main assembly take farewell.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

Have fallen all profitless, 'tis long of you,  
And of the Scots; in no wise of the queen.  
For first the lords of Scotland, being required,  
Flatly refused, to render up the king  
In hostage: and when treaty last was held  
Upon your freedom, then was Parry sent  
By your dependant Morgan privily  
To make the queen away by murder.

MARY STUART. Ah!

You are my adversary.

BURGHLEY. Yea, surely I am  
To the queen's adversaries an adversary.  
But now hereof enough: let us proceed  
Henceforth to proofs.

MARY STUART. I will not hear them.

BURGHLEY. Yet  
Hear them will we.

MARY STUART. And in another place  
I too will hear them, and defend myself.

GAWDY. First let your letters to Charles Paget speak,  
Wherein you show him there is none other way  
For Spain to bring the Netherlands again  
To the old obedience, but by setting up  
A prince in England that might help his cause:  
Then to Lord Paget, to bring hastiler  
His forces up for help to invade this land:  
And Cardinal Allen's letter, hailing you  
His most dread sovereign lady, and signifying  
The matter to the prince of Parma's care  
To be commended.

MARY STUART. I am so sore beset  
I know not how by point and circumstance

To meet your manifold impeachments: this  
I see through all this charge for evil truth,  
That Babington and my two secretaries  
Have even to excuse themselves accused me: yet,  
As touching that conspiracy, this I say,  
Of those six men for execution chosen  
I never heard: and all the rest is nought  
To this pretended purpose of your charge.  
For Cardinal Allen, whatsoe'er he have writ,  
I hold him for a reverend prelate, so  
To be esteemed, no more: none save the Pope  
Will I acknowledge for the church's head  
And sovereign thence on thought or spirit of mine:  
But in what rank and place I stand esteemed  
Of him and foreign princes through the world  
I know not: neither can I hinder them  
By letters writ of their own hearts and hands  
To hail me queen of England. As for those  
Whose duty and plain allegiance sworn to me  
Stands flawed in all men's sight, my secretaries,  
These merit no belief. They which have once  
Forsworn themselves, albeit they swear again  
With oaths and protestations ne'er so great,  
Are not to be believed. Nor may these men  
By what sworn oath soever hold them bound  
In court of conscience, seeing they have sworn to me  
Their secrecy and fidelity before,  
And are no subjects of this country. Nau  
Hath many times writ other than I bade,  
And Curle sets down whate'er Nau bids him write  
But for my part I am ready in all to bear  
*The burden of their fault, save what may lay,*

A blot upon mine honour. Haply too  
These things did they confess to save themselves;  
Supposing their avowal could hurt not me,  
Who, being a queen, they thought, good ignorant men,  
More favourably must needs be dealt withal.  
For Ballard, I ne'er heard of any such,  
But of one Hallard once that proffered me  
Such help as I would none of, knowing this man  
Had vowed his service too to Walsingham.

GAWDY. Next, from your letters to Mendoza, writ  
By Curle, as freely his confession shows,  
In privy cipher, take these few brief notes  
For perfect witness of your full design.  
You find yourself, the Spaniard hears thereby,  
Sore troubled what best course to take anew  
For your affairs this side the sea, whereon  
Charles Paget hath a charge to impart from you  
Some certain overtures to Spain and him  
In your behalf, whom you desire with prayer  
Show freely what he thinks may be obtained  
Thus from the king his master. One point more  
Have you reserved thereon depending, which  
On your behalf you charge him send the king  
Some secret word concerning, no man else,  
If this be possible, being privy to it:  
Even this, that seeing your son's great obstinacy  
In heresy, and foreseeing too sure thereon  
Most imminent danger and harm thence like to ensue  
To the Catholic church, he coming to bear rule  
Within this kingdom, you are resolved at heart  
In case your son be not reduced again  
To the Catholic faith before your death, whereof

Plainly you say small hope is yours so long  
As he shall bide in Scotland, to give up  
To that said king, and grant in absolute right,  
Your claim upon succession to this crown,  
By your last will made; praying him on this cause  
From that time forth wholly to take yourself  
Into his keeping, and therewith the state  
And charge of all this country: which, you say,  
You cannot for discharge of conscience think  
That you could put into a prince's hands  
More zealous for your faith, and abler found  
To build it strong upon this side again,  
Even as through all parts else of Christendom.  
But this let silence keep in secret, lest  
Being known it be your dowry's loss in France,  
And open breach in Scotland with your son,  
And in this realm of England utterly  
Your ruin and destruction. On your part  
Next is he bidden thank his lord the king  
For liberal grace and sovereign favour shown  
Lord Paget and his brother, which you pray him  
Most earnestly to increase, and gratify  
Poor Morgan with some pension for your sake  
Who hath not for your sake only endured so much  
But for the common cause. Likewise, and last,  
Is one he knows commended to his charge  
With some more full supply to be sustained  
Than the entertainment that yourself allot  
According to the little means you have.

BURGHLEY. Hereon stands proof apparent of that  
charge

Which you but now put by, that you design

MARY STUART.                      No such proof

**WALSINGHAM.**

BURGHLEY. Nay, but these

16\*



Whereto your own words witness, saying if this  
Were blown abroad your cause were utterly  
Lost in all hearts of English friends. Therein  
Your thoughts hit right: for here in all men's mind:  
That are not mad with envying at the truth  
Death were no loathlier than a stranger king.  
If you would any more, speak: if not aught,  
This cause is ended.

MARY STUART. I require again  
Before a full and open parliament  
Hearing, or speech in person with the queen,  
Who shall, I hope, have of a queen regard,  
And with the council. So, in trust hereof,  
I crave a word with some of you apart,  
And of this main assembly take farewell.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.  
ELIZABETH.

SCENE I.—*Richmond.*

WALSINGHAM *and* DAVISON.

WALSINGHAM. It is God's wrath, too sure, that holds  
her hand;  
His plague upon this people, to preserve  
By her sole mean her deadliest enemy, known  
By proof more potent than approof of law  
In all points guilty, but on more than all  
Toward all this country dangerous. To take off  
From the court held last month at Fotheringay  
Authority with so full commission given  
To pass upon her judgment—suddenly  
Cut short by message of some three lines writ  
With hurrying hand at midnight, and despatched  
To maim its work upon the second day,  
What else may this be in so wise a queen  
But madness, as a brand to sear the brain  
Of one by God infatuate? yea, and now  
That she receives the French ambassador  
With one more special envoy from his king,  
Except their message touch her spleen with fire  
And so undo itself, we cannot tell

What doubt may work upon her. Had we but  
 Some sign more evident of some private seal  
 Confirming toward her by more personal proof  
 The Scottish queen's inveteracy, for this  
 As for our country plucked from imminent death  
 We might thank God: but with such gracious words  
 Of piteous challenge and imperial plea  
 She hath wrought by letter on our mistress' mind,  
 We may not think her judgment so could slip,  
 Borne down with passion or forgetfulness,  
 As to leave bare her bitter root of heart  
 And core of evil will there labouring.

DAVISON.

Yet

I see no shade of other surety cast  
 From any sign of likelihood. It were  
 Not shameful more than dangerous, though she bade,  
 To have her prisoner privily made away;  
 Yet stands the queen's heart wellnigh fixed hereon  
 When aught may seem to fix it; then as fast  
 Wavers, but veers to that bad point again  
 Whence blowing the wind blows down her honour, nor  
 Brings surety of life with fame's destruction.

WALSINGHAM.

Aye,

We are no Catholic keepers, and his charge  
 Need fear no poison in our watch-dog's fang,  
 Though he show honest teeth at her, to threat  
 Thieves' hands with loyal danger.

*Enter QUEEN ELIZABETH, attended by BURGHLEY, LEICESTER, HUNSDON, HATTON, and others of the Council.*

ELIZABETH.

No, my lords,

We are not so weak of wit as men that need

Be counselled of their enemies. Blame us not  
That we accuse your friendship on this cause  
Of too much fearfulness: France we will hear,  
Nor doubt but France shall hear us all as loud  
As friend or foe may threaten or protest,  
Of our own heart advised, and resolute more  
Than hearts that need men's counsel. Bid them in.

*Enter CHÂTEAUNEUF and BELLÈVRE, attended.*

From our fair cousin of France what message, sirs?

BELLÈVRE. I, madam, have in special charge to lay  
The king's mind open to your majesty,  
Which gives my tongue first leave of speech more free  
Than from a common envoy. Sure it is,  
No man more grieves at what his heart abhors,  
The counsels of your highness' enemies,  
Than doth the king of France: wherein how far  
The queen your prisoner have borne part, or may  
Seem of their works partaker, he can judge  
Nought: but much less the king may understand  
What men may stand accusers, who rise up  
Judge in so great a matter. Men of law  
May lay their charges on a subject: but  
The queen of Scotland, dowager queen of France,  
And sister made by wedlock to the king,  
To none being subject, can be judged of none  
Without such violence done on rule as breaks  
Prerogative of princes. Nor may man  
That looks upon your present majesty  
In such clear wise apparent, and retains  
Remembrance of your name through all the world  
For virtuous wisdom, bring his mind to think  
That England's royal-souled Elizabeth,

Being set so high in fame, can so forget  
Wise Plato's word, that common souls are wrought  
Out of dull iron and slow lead, but kings  
Of gold untempered with so vile alloy  
As makes all metal up of meaner men.  
But say this were not thus, and all men's awe  
Were from all time toward kingship merely vain,  
And state no more worth reverence, yet the plea  
Were nought which here your ministers pretend,  
That while the queen of Scots lives you may live  
No day that knows not danger. Were she dead,  
Rather might then your peril wax indeed  
To shape and sense of heavier portent, whom  
The Catholic states now threat not, nor your land,  
For this queen's love, but rather for their faith's,  
Whose cause, were she by violent hand removed,  
Could be but furthered, and its enterprise  
Put on more strong and prosperous pretext; yea,  
You shall but draw the invasion on this land  
Whose threat you so may think to stay, and bring  
Imminence down of inroad. Thus far forth  
The queen of Scots hath for your person been  
Even as a targe or buckler which has caught  
All intercepted shafts against your state  
Shot, or a stone held fast within your hand,  
Which, if you cast it thence in fear or wrath  
To smite your adversary, is cast away,  
And no mean left therein for menace. If  
You lay but hand upon her life, albeit  
There were that counselled this, her death will mak  
Your enemies weapons of their own despair  
And give their whetted wrath excuse and edge

More plausibly to strike more perilously.  
Your grace is known for strong in foresight: we  
These nineteen years of your wise reign have kept  
Fast watch in France upon you: of those claims  
Which lineally this queen here prisoner may  
Put forth on your succession have you made  
The stoutest rampire of your rule: and this  
Is grown a byword with us, that their cause  
Who shift the base whereon their policies lean  
Bows down toward ruin: and of loyal heart  
This will I tell you, madam, which hath been  
Given me for truth assured of one whose place  
Affirms him honourable, how openly  
A certain prince's minister that well  
May stand in your suspicion says abroad  
That for his master's greatness it were good  
The queen of Scots were lost already, seeing  
He is well assured the Catholics here should then  
All wholly range them on his master's part.  
Thus long hath reigned your highness happily,  
Who have loved fair temperance more than violence:

now,

While honour bids have mercy, wisdom holds  
Equal at least the scales of interest. Think  
What name shall yours be found in time far hence,  
Even as you deal with her that in your hand  
Lies not more subject than your fame to come  
In men's repute that shall be. Bid her live,  
And ever shall my lord stand bound to you  
And you for ever firm in praise of men.

ELIZABETH. I am sorry, sir, you are hither come  
from France

Upon no better errand. I appeal  
To God for judge between my cause and hers  
Whom here you stand for. In this realm of mine  
The queen of Scots sought shelter, and therein  
Hath never found but kindness; for which grace  
In recompense she hath three times sought my life.  
No grief that on this head yet ever fell  
Shook ever from mine eyes so many a tear  
As this last plot upon it. I have read  
As deep I doubt me in as many books  
As any queen or prince in Christendom,  
Yet never chanced on aught so strange and sad  
As this my state's calamity. Mine own life  
Is by mere nature precious to myself,  
And in mine own realm I can live not safe.  
I am a poor lone woman, girt about  
With secret enemies that perpetually  
Lay wait for me to kill me. From your king  
Why have not I my traitor to my hands  
Delivered up, who now this second time  
Hath sought to slay me, Morgan? On my part,  
Had mine own cousin Hunsdon here conspired  
Against the French king's life, he had found not so  
Refuge of me, nor even for kindred's sake  
From the edge of law protection: and this cause  
Needs present evidence of this man's mouth.

BELLIEVRE. Madam, there stand against the queen  
of Scots

Already here in England on this charge  
So many and they so dangerous witnesses  
No need can be to bring one over more:  
*Nor* can the king show such unnatural heart.

As to send hither a knife for enemies' hands  
To cut his sister's throat. Most earnestly  
My lord expects your resolution: which  
If we receive as given against his plea,  
I must crave leave to part for Paris hence.  
Yet give me pardon first if yet once more  
I pray your highness be assured, and so  
Take heed in season, you shall find this queen  
More dangerous dead than living. Spare her life,  
And not my lord alone but all that reign  
Shall be your sureties in all Christian lands  
Against all scathe of all conspiracies  
Made on her party: while such remedies' ends  
As physic states with bloodshedding, to cure  
Danger by death, bring fresh calamities  
Far oftener forth than the old are healed of them  
Which so men thought to medicine. To refrain  
From that red-handed way of rule, and set  
Justice no higher than mercy sits beside,  
Is the first mean of kings' prosperity  
That would reign long: nor will my lord believe  
Your highness could put off yourself so much  
As to reverse and tread upon the law  
That you thus long have kept and honourably:  
But should this perilous purpose hold right on,  
I am bounden by my charge to say, the king  
Will not regard as liable to your laws  
A queen's imperial person, nor will hold  
Her death as but the general wrong of kings  
And no more his than as his brethren's all,  
But as his own and special injury done,  
More than to these injurious.



ELIZABETH. Doth your lord  
Bid you speak thus?  
BELLÈVRE. Aye, madam: from his mouth  
Had I command what speech to use.  
ELIZABETH. You have done  
Better to speak than he to send it. Sir,  
You shall not presently depart this land  
As one denied of mere discourtesy.  
I will return an envoy of mine own  
To speak for me at Paris with the king.  
You shall bear back a letter from my hand,  
And give your lord assurance, having seen,  
I cannot be so frightened with men's threats  
That they shall not much rather move my mind  
To quicken than to slack the righteous doom  
Which none must think by menace to put back,  
Or daunt it with defiance. Sirs, good day.  
[*Exeunt Ambassadors.*]  
I were as one belated with false lights  
If I should think to steer my darkling way  
By twilight furtherance of their wiles and words.  
Think you, my lords, France yet would have her live?  
BURGHLEV. If there be other than the apparent  
end  
Hid in this mission to your majesty,  
Mine envoys can by no means fathom it,  
Who deal for me at Paris: fear of Spain  
Lays double hand as 'twere upon the king,  
Lest by removal of the queen of Scots  
A way be made for peril in the claim  
More potent than of Philip; and if there come  
From his Farnese note of enterprise

Or danger this way tending, France will yet  
Cleave to your friendship though his sister die.

ELIZABETH. So, in your mind, this half-souled brother  
would

Steer any way that might keep safe his sail  
Against a southern wind, which here, he thinks,  
Her death might strengthen from the north again  
To blow against him off our subject straits,  
Made servile then and Spanish? Yet perchance  
There swells behind our seas a heart too high  
To bow more easily down, and bring this land  
More humbly to such handling, than their waves  
Bow down to ships of strangers, or their storms  
To breath of any lord on earth but God.  
What thinks our cousin?

HUNSDON. That if Spain or France  
Or both be stronger than the heart in us  
Which beats to battle ere they menace, why,  
In God's name, let them rise and make their prey  
Of what was England: but if neither be,  
The smooth-checked French man-harlot, nor that hand  
Which help to light Rome's fires with English limbs,  
Let us not keep to make their weakness strong  
A pestilence here alive in England, which  
Gives force to their faint enmities, and burns  
Half the heart out of loyal trust and hope  
With heat that kindles treason.

ELIZABETH. By this light,  
I have heard worse counsel from a wise man's tongue  
Than this clear note of forthright soldiership.  
How say you, Dudley, to it?

LEICESTER. Madam, ere this

You have had my mind upon the matter, writ  
But late from Holland, that no public stroke  
Should fall upon this princess, who may be  
By privy death more happily removed  
Without impeach of majesty, nor leave  
A sign against your judgment, to call down  
Blame of strange kings for wrong to kingship wrought  
Though right were done to justice.

ELIZABETH.

Of your love

We know it is that comes this counsel; nor,  
Had we such friends of all our servants, need  
Our mind be now distraught with dangerous doubts  
That find no screen from dangers. Yet meseems  
One doubt stands now removed, if doubt there were  
Of aught from Scotland ever: Walsingham,  
You should have there intelligence whereof  
To make these lords with us partakers.

WALSINGHAM.

Nay,

Madam, no more than from a trustless hand  
Protest and promise: of those twain that come  
Hot on these Frenchmen's heels in embassy,  
He that in counsel on this cause was late  
One with my lord of Leicester now, to rid  
By draught of secret death this queen away,  
Bears charge to say as these gone hence have said  
In open audience, but by personal note  
Hath given me this to know, that howsoe'er  
His king indeed desire her life be spared  
Much may be wrought upon him, would your grace  
More richly line his ragged wants with gold  
And by full utterance of your parliament  
Approve him heir in England.

ELIZABETH.

Aye! no more?

God's blood! what grace is proffered us at need,  
And on what mild conditions! Say I will not  
Redeem such perils at so dear a price,  
Shall not our pensioner too join hands with France  
And pay my gold with iron barter back  
At edge of sword he dares not look upon,  
They tell us, for the scathe and scare he took  
Even in this woman's womb when shot and steel  
Undid the manhood in his veins unborn  
And left his tongue's threats handless?

WALSINGHAM.

Men there be,

Your majesty must think, who bear but ill,  
For pride of country and high-heartedness,  
To see the king they serve your servant so  
That not his mother's life and once their queen's  
Being at such point of peril can enforce  
One warlike word of his for chance of war  
Conditional against you. Word came late  
From Edinburgh that there the citizens  
With hoot and hiss had bayed him through the streets  
As he went heartless by; of whom they had heard  
This published saying, that in his personal mind  
The blood of kindred or affinity  
So much not binds us as the friendship pledged  
To them that are not of our blood: and this  
Stands clear for certain, that no breath of war  
Shall breathe from him against us though she die,  
Except his titular claim be reft from him  
On our succession: and that all his mind  
Is but to reign unpartnered with a power  
Which should weigh down that half his kingdom's weight.

Left to his hand's share nominally in hold:  
And for his mother, this would he desire,  
That she were kept from this day to her death  
Close prisoner in one chamber, never more  
To speak with man or woman: and hereon  
That proclamation should be made of her  
As of one subject formally declared  
To the English law whereby, if she offend  
Again with iterance of conspiracy,  
She shall not as a queen again be tried,  
But as your vassal and a private head  
Live liable to the doom and stroke of death.

ELIZABETH. She is bounden to him as he long sinc  
to her,

Who would have given his kingdom up at least  
To his dead father's slayer, in whose red hand  
How safe had lain his life too doubt may guess,  
Which yet kept dark her purpose then on him,  
Dark now no more to usward. Think you then  
That they belie him, whose suspicion saith  
His ear and heart are yet inclined to Spain,  
If from that brother-in-law that was of ours  
And would have been our bridegroom he may win  
Help of strange gold and foreign soldiership,  
With Scottish furtherance of those Catholic lords  
Who are stronger-spirited in their faith than ours,  
Being harried more of heretics, as they say,  
Than these within our borders, to root out  
The creed there stablished now, and do to death  
Its ministers, with all the lords their friends,  
Lay hands on all strong places there, and rule  
As prince upon their party? since he fain

From ours would be divided, and cast in  
His lot with Rome against us too, from these  
Might he but earn assurance of their faith,  
Revolting from his own. May these things be  
More than mere muttering breath of trustless lies,  
And half his heart yet hover toward our side  
For all such hope or purpose?

WALSINGHAM.                      Of his heart  
We know not, madam, surely; nor doth he  
Who follows fast on their first envoy sent,  
And writes to excuse him of his message here  
On her behalf apparent, but in sooth  
Aimed otherwise; the Master I mean of Gray,  
Who swears me here by letter, if he be not  
True to the queen of England, he is content  
To have his head fall on a scaffold: saying,  
To put from him this charge of embassy  
Had been his ruin, but the meaning of it  
Is modest and not menacing: whereto  
If you will yield not yet to spare the life  
So near its forfeit now, he thinks it well  
You should be pleased by some commission given  
To stay by the way his comrade and himself,  
Or bid them back.

ELIZABETH.                      What man is this then, sent  
With such a knave to fellow?

WALSINGHAM.                      No such knave,  
But still your prisoner's friend of old time found:  
Sir Robert Melville.

ELIZABETH.                      And an honest man  
As faith might wish her servants: but what pledge  
Will these produce me for security

That I may spare this dangerous life and live  
Unscathed of after practice?

WALSINGHAM.

As I think,

The king's self and his whole nobility  
Will be her personal pledges; and her son,  
If England yield her to his hand in charge,  
On no less strait a bond will undertake  
For her safe keeping.

ELIZABETH.

That were even to arm

With double power mine adversary, and make him  
The stronger by my hand to do me hurt—  
Were he mine adversary indeed: which yet  
I will not hold him. Let them find a mean  
For me to live unhurt and save her life,  
It shall well please me. Say this king of Scots  
Himself would give his own inheritance up  
Pretended in succession, if but once  
Her hand were found or any friend's of hers  
Again put forth upon me for her sake,  
Why, haply so might hearts be satisfied  
Of lords and commons then to let her live.  
But this I doubt he had rather take her life  
Himself than yield up to us for pledge: and less,  
These men shall know of me, I will not take  
In price of her redemption: which were else,  
And haply may in no wise not be held,  
To this my loyal land and mine own trust  
A deadlier stroke and blast of sound more dire  
Than noise of fleets invasive.

WALSINGHAM.

Surely so

Would all hearts hold it, madam, in that land  
*That are not enemies of the land and yours;*

For ere the doom had been proclaimed an hour  
Which gave to death your main foe's head and theirs  
Yourself have heard what fire of joy brake forth  
From all your people: how their church-towers all  
Rang in with jubilant acclaim of bells  
The day that bore such tidings, and the night  
That laughed aloud with lightning of their joy  
And thundered round its triumph: twice twelve hours  
This tempest of thanksgiving roared and shone  
Sheer from the Solway's to the Channel's foam  
With light as from one festal-flaming hearth  
And sound as of one trumpet: not a tongue  
But praised God for it, or heart that leapt not up,  
Save of your traitors and their country's: these  
Withered at heart and shrank their heads in close,  
As though the bright sun's were a basilisk's eye,  
And light, that gave all others comfort, flame  
And smoke to theirs of hell's own darkness, whence  
Such eyes were blinded or put out with fire.

ELIZABETH. Yea, I myself, I mind me, might not sleep  
Those twice twelve hours thou speak'st of. By God's light,  
Be it most in love of me or fear of her  
I know not, but my people seems in sooth  
Hot and anhungered on this trail of hers:  
Nor is it a people bloody-minded, used  
To lap the life up of an enemy's vein  
Who bleeds to death unweaponed: our good hounds  
Will course a quarry soldierlike in war,  
But rage not hangmanlike upon the prey,  
To flesh their fangs on limbs that strive not: yet  
Their hearts are hotter on this course than mine,  
Which most was deadliest aimed at.



WALSINGHAM.

Even for that

How should not theirs be hot as fire from hell  
To burn your danger up and slay that soul  
Alive that seeks it? Thinks your majesty  
There beats a heart where treason hath not turned  
All English blood to poison, which would feel  
No deadlier pang of dread more deathful to it  
To hear of yours endangered than to feel  
A sword against its own life bent, or know  
Death imminent as darkness overhead  
That takes the noon from one man's darkening eye  
As must your death from all this people's? You  
Are very England: in your light of life  
This living land of yours walks only safe,  
And all this breathing people with your breath  
Breathes unenslaved, and draws at each pulse in  
Freedom: your eye is light of theirs, your word  
As God's to comfort England, whose whole soul  
Is made with yours one, and her witness you  
That Rome or hell shall take not hold on her  
Again till God be wroth with us so much  
As to reclaim for heaven the star that yet  
Lights all your land that looks on it, and gives  
Assurance higher than danger dares assail  
Save in this lady's name and service, who  
Must now from you take judgment.

ELIZABETH.

Must! by God

I know not *must* but as a word of mine,  
My tongue's and not mine ear's familiar. Sirs,  
Content yourselves to know this much of us,  
Or having known remember, that we sent  
The Lord of Buckhurst and our servant Beale

To acquaint this queen our prisoner with the doom  
Confirmed on second trial against her, saying  
Her word can weigh not down the weightier guilt  
Approved upon her, and by parliament  
Since fortified with sentence. Yea, my lords,  
Ye should forget not how by message then  
I bade her know of me with what strong force  
Of strenuous and invincible argument  
I am urged to hold no more in such delay  
The process of her execution, being  
The seed-plot of these late conspiracies,  
Their author and chief motive: and am told  
That if I yield not mine the guilt must be  
In God's and in the whole world's suffering sight  
Of all the miseries and calamities  
To ensue on my refusal: whence, albeit  
I know not yet how God shall please to incline  
My heart on that behalf, I have thought it meet  
In conscience yet that she should be forewarned,  
That so she might bethink her of her sins  
Done both toward God offensive and to me  
And pray for grace to be true penitent  
For all these faults: which, had the main fault reached  
No further than mine own poor person, God  
Stands witness with what truth my heart protests  
I freely would have pardoned. She to this  
Makes bitter answer as of desperate heart  
All we may wreak our worst upon her; whom  
Having to death condemned, we may fulfil  
Our wicked work, and God in Paradise  
With just atonement shall requite her. This  
Ye see is all the pardon she will ask,

Being only, and even as 'twere with prayer, desired  
To crave of us forgiveness: and thereon  
Being by Lord Buckhurst charged on this point home  
That by her mean the Catholics here had learnt  
To hold her for their sovereign, on which cause  
Nor my religion nor myself might live  
Uncharged with danger while her life should last,  
She answering gives God thanks aloud to be  
Held of so great account upon his side,  
And in God's cause and in the church of God's  
Rejoicingly makes offering of her life;  
Which I, God knows how unrejoicingly,  
Can scarce, ye tell me, choose but take, or yield  
At least for you to take it. Yet, being told  
It is not for religion she must die,  
But for a plot by compass of her own  
Laid to dethrone me and destroy, she casts  
Again this answer barbed with mockery back,  
She was not so presumptuous born, to aspire  
To two such ends yet ever: yea, so far  
She dwelt from such desire removed in heart,  
She would not have me suffer by her will  
The fillip of a finger: though herself  
Be persecuted even as David once  
And her mishap be that she cannot so  
Fly by the window forth as David: whence  
It seems she likens us to Saul, and looks  
Haply to see us as on Mount Gilboa fallen,  
Where yet, for all the shooters on her side,  
Our shield shall be not vilely cast away,  
As of one unanointed. Yet, my lords,  
*If England might but by my death attain*

A state more flourishing with a better prince,  
Gladly would I lay down my life; who have  
No care save only for my people's sake  
To keep it: for myself, in all the world  
I see no great cause why for all this coil  
I should be fond to live or fear to die.  
If I should say unto you that I mean  
To grant not your petition, by my faith,  
More should I so say haply than I mean:  
Or should I say I mean to grant it, this  
Were, as I think, to tell you of my mind  
More than is fit for you to know: and thus  
I must for all petitionary prayer  
Deliver you an answer answerless.  
Yet will I pray God lighten my dark mind  
That being illumined it may thence foresee  
What for his church and all this commonwealth  
May most be profitable: and this once known,  
My hand shall halt not long behind his will.

SCENE II.—*Fotheringay.*

SIR AMYAS PAULET *and* SIR DREW DRURY.

PAULET. I never gave God heartier thanks than these  
I give to have you partner of my charge  
Now most of all, these letters being to you  
No less designed than me, and you in heart  
One with mine own upon them. Certainly,  
When I put hand to pen this morning past  
That Master Davison by mine evidence  
Might note what sore disquietudes I had

To increase my griefs before of body and mind,  
I looked for no such word to cut off mine  
As these to us both of Walsingham's and his.  
Would rather yet I had cause to still complain  
Of those unanswered letters two months past  
Than thus be certified of such intents  
As God best knoweth I never sought to know,  
Or search out secret causes: though to hear  
Nothing at all did breed, as I confessed,  
In me some hard conceits against myself,  
I had rather yet rest ignorant than ashamed  
Of such ungracious knowledge. This shall be  
Fruit as I think of dread wrought on the queen  
By those seditious rumours whose report  
Blows fear among the people lest our charge  
Escape our trust, or as they term it now  
Be taken away,—such apprehensive tongues  
So phrase it—and her freedom strike men's hearts  
More deep than all these flying fears that say  
London is fired of Papists, or the Scots  
Have crossed in arms the Border, or the north  
Is risen again rebellious, or the Guise  
Is disembarked in Sussex, or that now  
In Milford Haven rides a Spanish fleet—  
All which, albeit but footless floating lies,  
May all too easily smite and work too far  
Even on the heart most royal in the world  
That ever was a woman's.

DRURY.

Good my friend,

These noises come without a thunderbolt  
In such dense air of dusk expectancy  
As all this land lies under; nor will some

Doubt or think much to say of those reports  
They are broached and vented of men's credulous mouths  
Whose ears have caught them from such lips as meant  
Merely to strike more terror in the queen  
And wring that warrant from her hovering hand  
Which falters yet and flutters on her lip  
While the hand hangs and trembles half advanced  
Upon that sentence which, the treasurer said,  
Should well ere this have spoken, seeing it was  
More than a full month old and four days more  
When he so looked to hear the word of it  
Which yet lies sealed of silence.

PAULET.

Will you say,

Or any as wise and loyal, say or think  
It was but for a show, to scare men's wits,  
They have raised this hue and cry upon her flight  
Supposed from hence, to waken Exeter  
With noise from Honiton and Sampfield spread  
Of proclamation to detain all ships  
And lay all highways for her day and night,  
And send like precepts out four manner of ways  
From town to town, to make in readiness  
Their armour and artillery, with all speed,  
On pain of death, for London by report  
Was set on fire? though, God be therefore praised,  
We know this is not, yet the noise hereof  
Were surely not to be neglected, seeing  
There is, meseems, indeed no readier way  
To levy forces for the achieving that  
Which so these lewd reporters feign to fear.

DRURY. Why, in such mighty matters and such mists  
Wise men may think what hardly fools would say,

And eyes get glimpse of more than sight hath leave  
To give commission for the babbling tongue  
Aloud to cry they have seen. This noise that was  
Upon one Arden's flight, a traitor, whence  
Fear flew last week all round us, gave but note  
How lightly may men's minds take fire, and words  
Take wing that have no feet to fare upon  
More solid than a shadow.

PAULET. Nay, he was  
Escaped indeed: and every day thus brings  
Forth its new mischief: as this last month did  
Those treasons of the French ambassador  
Designed against our mistress, which God's grace  
Laid by the knave's mean bare to whom they sought  
For one to slay her, and of the Pope's hand earn  
Ten thousand blood-encrusted crowns a year  
To his most hellish hire. You will not say  
This too was merely fraud or vision wrought  
By fear or cloudy falsehood?

DRURY. I will say  
No more or surelier than I know: and this  
I know not thoroughly to the core of truth  
Or heart of falsehood in it. A man may lie  
Merely, or trim some bald lean truth with lies,  
Or patch bare falsehood with some tatter of truth,  
And each of these pass current: but of these  
Which likeliest may this man's tale be who gave  
Word of his own temptation by these French  
To hire them such a murderer, and avowed  
He held it godly cunning to comply  
And bring this envoy's secretary to sight  
*Of one clapped up for debts in Newgate, who*

Being thence released might readily, as he said,  
Even by such means as once this lady's lord  
Was made away with, make the queen away  
With powder fired beneath her bed—why, this,  
Good sooth, I guess not; but I doubt the man  
To be more liar than fool, and yet, God wot,  
More fool than traitor; most of all intent  
To conjure coin forth of the Frenchman's purse  
With tricks of mere effrontery: thus at least  
We know did Walsingham esteem of him:  
And if by Davison held of more account,  
Or merely found more serviceable, and made  
A mean to tether up those quick French tongues  
From threat or pleading for this prisoner's life,  
I cannot tell, and care not. Though the queen  
Hath stayed this envoy's secretary from flight  
Forth of the kingdom, and committed him  
To ward within the Tower while Châteauneuf  
Himself should come before a council held  
At my lord treasurer's, where being thus accused  
At first he cared not to confront the man,  
But stood upon his office, and the charge  
Of his king's honour and prerogative—  
Then bade bring forth the knave, who being brought  
forth  
Outfaced him with insistence front to front  
And took the record of this whole tale's truth  
Upon his soul's damnation, challenging  
The Frenchman's answer in denial hereof,  
That of his own mouth had this witness been  
Traitorously tempted, and by personal plea  
Directly drawn to treason: which awhile



Struck dumb the ambassador as amazed with wrath,  
Till presently, the accuser being removed,  
He made avowal this fellow some while since  
Had given his secretary to wit there lay  
One bound in Newgate who being thence released  
Would take the queen's death on his hand: whereto  
Answering, he bade the knave avoid his house  
On pain, if once their ways should cross, to be  
Sent bound before the council: who replied  
He had done foul wrong to take no further note,  
But being made privy to this damned device  
Keep close its perilous knowledge; whence the queen  
Might well complain against him; and hereon  
They fell to wrangling on this cause, that he  
Professed himself to no man answerable  
For declaration or for secret held  
Save his own master: so that now is gone  
Sir William Wade to Paris, not with charge  
To let the king there know this queen shall live,  
But to require the ambassador's recall  
And swift delivery of our traitors there  
To present justice: yet may no man say,  
For all these half-faced scares and policies,  
Here was more sooth than seeming.

PAULET.

Why, these crafts  
Were shameful then as fear's most shameful self,  
If thus your wit read them aright; and we  
Should for our souls and lives alike do ill  
To jeopard them on such men's surety given  
As make no more account of simple faith  
Than true men make of liars: and these are they,  
Our friends and masters, that rebuke us both

By speech late uttered of her majesty  
For lack of zeal in service and of care  
She looked for at our hands, in that we have not  
In all this time, unprompted, of ourselves  
Found out some way to cut this queen's life off,  
Seeing how great peril, while her enemy lives,  
She is hourly subject unto: saying, she notes,  
Besides a kind of lack of love to her,  
Herein we have not that particular care  
Forsooth of our own safeties, or indeed  
Of the faith rather and the general good,  
That politic reason bids; especially,  
Having so strong a warrant and such ground  
For satisfaction of our consciences  
To Godward, and discharge of credit kept  
And reputation toward the world, as is  
That oath whereby we stand associated  
To prosecute inexorably to death  
Both with our joint and our particular force  
All by whose hand and all on whose behalf  
Our sovereign's life is struck at: as by proof  
Stands charged upon our prisoner. So they write,  
As though the queen's own will had warranted  
The words that by her will's authority  
Were blotted from the bond, whereby that head  
Was doomed on whose behoof her life should be  
By treason threatened: for she would not have  
Aught pass which grieved her subjects' consciences,  
She said, or might abide not openly  
The whole world's view: nor would she any one  
Were punished for another's fault: and so  
Cut off the plea whereon she now desires

That we should dip our secret hands in blood  
With no direction given of her own mouth  
So to pursue that dangerous head to death  
By whose assent her life were sought: for this  
Stands fixed for only warrant of such deed,  
And this we have not, but her word instead  
She takes it most unkindly toward herself  
That men professing toward her loyally  
That love that we do should in any sort,  
For lack of our own duty's full discharge,  
Cast upon her the burden, knowing as we  
Her slowness to shed blood, much more of one  
So near herself in blood as is this queen,  
And one with her in sex and quality.  
And these respects, they find, or so profess,  
Do greatly trouble her: who hath sundry times  
Protested, they assure us, earnestly,  
That if regard of her good subjects' risk  
Did not more move her than the personal fear  
Of proper peril to her, she never would  
Be drawn to assent unto this bloodshedding:  
And so to our good judgments they refer  
These speeches they thought meet to acquaint us  
with

As passed but lately from her majesty,  
And to God's guard commend us: which God knows  
We should much more need than deserve of him  
Should we give ear to this, and as they bid  
Make heretics of these papers; which three times  
You see how Davison hath enforced on us:  
But they shall taste no fire for me, nor pass  
Back to his hands till copies writ of them

Lie safe in mine for sons of mine to keep  
In witness how their father dealt herein.

DRURY. You have done the wiselier: and what word  
soe'er

Shall bid them know your mind, I am well assured  
It well may speak for me too.

PAULET. Thus it shall:  
That having here his letters in my hands,  
I would not fail, according to his charge,  
To send back answer with all possible speed  
Which shall deliver unto him my great grief  
And bitterness of mind, in that I am  
So much unhappy as I hold myself  
To have lived to look on this unhappy day,  
When I by plain direction am required  
From my most gracious sovereign's mouth to do  
An act which God forbiddeth, and the law.  
Hers are my goods and livings, and my life,  
Held at her disposition, and myself  
Am ready so to lose them this next day  
If it shall please her so, acknowledging  
I hold them of her mere goodwill, and do not  
Desire them to enjoy them but so long  
As her great grace gives leave: but God forbid  
That I should make for any grace of hers  
So foul a shipwreck of my conscience, or  
Leave ever to my poor posterity  
So great a blot, as privily to shed blood  
With neither law nor warrant. So, in trust  
That she, of her accustomed clemency,  
Will take my dutiful answer in good part,  
By his good mediation, as returned

From one who never will be less in love,  
Honour, obedience, duty to his queen,  
Than any Christian subject living, thus  
To God's grace I commit him.

DRURY.

Though I doubt

She haply shall be much more wroth hereat  
Than lately she was gracious, when she bade  
God treblefold reward you for your charge  
So well discharged, saluting you by name  
Most faithful and most careful, you shall do  
Most like a wise man loyally to write  
But such good words as these, whereto myself  
Subscribe in heart: though being not named herein  
(Albeit to both seem these late letters meant)  
Nor this directed to me, I forbear  
To make particular answer. And indeed,  
Were danger less apparent in her life  
To the heart's life of all this living land,  
I would this woman might not die at all  
By secret stroke nor open sentence.

PAULET.

I

Will praise God's mercy most for this of all,  
When I shall see the murderous cause removed  
Of its most mortal peril: nor desire  
A guerdon ampler from the queen we serve,  
Besides her commendations of my faith  
For spotless actions and for safe regards,  
Than to see judgment on her enemy done;  
Which were for me that recompense indeed  
Whereof she writes as one not given to all,  
But for such merit reserved to crown its claim  
Above all common service: nor save this

Could any treasure's promise in the world  
 So ease those travails and rejoice this heart  
 That hers too much takes thought of, as to read  
 Her charge to carry for her sake in it  
 This most just thought, that she can balance not  
 The value that her grace doth prize me at  
 In any weight of judgment: yet it were  
 A word to me more comfortable at heart  
 Than these, though these most gracious, that should speak  
 Death to her death's contriver.

DRURY.

Nay, myself

Were fain to see this coil wound up, and her  
 Removed that makes it: yet such things will pluck  
 Hard at men's hearts that think on them, and move  
 Compassion that such long strange years should find  
 So strange an end: nor shall men ever say  
 But she was born right royal; full of sins,  
 It may be, and by circumstance or choice  
 Dyed and defaced with bloody stains and black,  
 Unmerciful, unfaithful, but of heart  
 So fiery high, so swift of spirit and clear,  
 In extreme danger and pain so lifted up,  
 So of all violent things inviolable,  
 So large of courage, so superb of soul,  
 So sheathed with iron mind invincible  
 And arms unbreached of fireproof constancy—  
 By shame not shaken, fear or force or death,  
 Change, or all confluence of calamities—  
 And so at her worst need beloved, and still,  
 Naked of help and honour when she seemed,  
 As other women would be, and of hope  
 Stripped, still so of herself adorable

By minds not always all ignobly mad  
Nor all made poisonous with false grain of faith,  
She shall be a world's wonder to all time,  
A deadly glory watched of marvelling men  
Not without praise, not without noble tears,  
And if without what she would never have  
Who had it never, pity—yet from none  
Quite without reverence and some kind of love  
For that which was so royal. Yea, and now  
That at her prayer we here attend on her,  
If, as I think, she have in mind to send  
Aught written to the queen, what we may do  
To further her desire shall on my part  
Gladly be done, so be it the grace she craves  
Be nought akin to danger.

PAULET.

It shall be

The first of all then craved by her of man,  
Or by man's service done her, that was found  
So harmless ever.

*Enter MARY STUART and MARY BEATON.*

MARY STUART.

Sirs, in time past by

I was desirous many times, ye know,  
To have written to your queen: but since I have had  
Advertisement of my conviction, seeing  
I may not look for life, my soul is set  
On preparation for another world:  
Yet none the less, not for desire of life,  
But for my conscience's discharge and rest,  
And for my last farewell, I have at heart  
By you to send her a memorial writ  
Of somewhat that concerns myself, when I  
Shall presently be gone out of this world.

And to remove from her, if such be there,  
Suspicion of all danger in receipt  
Of this poor paper that should come from me,  
Myself will take the assay of it, and so  
With mine own hands to yours deliver it.

PAULET. Will you not also, madam, be content  
To seal and close it in my presence up?

MARY STUART. Sir, willingly: but I beseech your word  
Pledged for its safe delivery to the queen.

PAULET. I plight my faith it shall be sent to her.

MARY STUART. This further promise I desire, you  
will

Procure me from above certificate  
It hath been there delivered.

DRURY. This is more  
Than we may stand so pledged for: in our power  
It is to send, but far beyond our power,  
As being above our place, to promise you  
Certificate or warrant.

MARY STUART. Yet I trust  
Consideration may be had of me  
After my death, as one derived in blood  
From your queen's grandsire, with all mortal rites  
According with that faith I have professed  
All my life-days as I was born therein.  
This is the sum of all mine askings: whence  
Well might I take it in ill part of you  
To wish me seal my letter in your sight,  
Bewraying your hard opinion of me.

PAULET. This  
Your own words well might put into my mind,  
That so beside my expectation made



Proffer to take my first assay for me  
Of the outer part of it: for you must think  
I was not ignorant that by sleight of craft  
There might be as great danger so conveyed  
Within the letter as without, and thus  
I could not for ill thoughts of you be blamed,  
Concurring with you in this jealousy:  
For had yourself not moved it of yourself  
Sir Drew nor I had ever thought on it.

MARY STUART. The occasion why I moved it was  
but this,

That having made my custom in time past  
To send sometimes some tokens to your queen,  
At one such time that I sent certain clothes  
One standing by advised her cause my gifts  
To be tried thoroughly ere she touched them; which  
I have since observed, and taken order thus  
With Nau, when last he tarried at the court,  
To do the like to a fur-fringed counterpane  
Which at that time I sent: and as for this,  
Look what great danger lies between these leaves  
That I dare take and handle in my hands,  
And press against my face each part of them  
Held open thus, and either deadly side,  
Wherein your fear smells death sown privily.

PAULET. Madam, when so you charged your secretary  
Her majesty was far from doubt, I think,  
Or dream of such foul dealing: and I would  
Suspicion since had found no just cause given,  
And then things had not been as now they are.

MARY STUART. But things are as they are, and here  
I stand

Convicted, and not knowing how many hours  
I have to live yet.

PAULET. Madam, you shall live  
As many hours as God shall please: but this  
May be said truly, that you here have been  
Convicted in most honourable sort  
And favourable.

MARY STUART. What favour have I found?

PAULET. Your cause hath been examined scrupulously  
By many our eldest nobles of this realm,  
Whereas by law you should but have been tried  
By twelve men as a common person.

MARY STUART. Nay,  
Your noblemen must by their peers be tried.

PAULET. All strangers of what quality soe'er  
In matter of crime are only to be tried  
In other princes' territories by law  
That in that realm bears rule.

MARY STUART. You have your laws:  
But other princes all will think of it  
As they see cause; and mine own son is now  
No more a child, but come to man's estate,  
And he will think of these things bitterly.

DRURY. Ingratitude, whate'er he think of them,  
Is odious in all persons, but of all  
In mightiest personages most specially  
Most hateful: and it will not be denied  
But that the queen's grace greatly hath deserved  
Both of yourself and of your son.

MARY STUART. What boon  
Shall I acknowledge? Being in bonds, I am set  
Free from the world, and therefore am I not

Afraid to speak; I have had the favour here  
To have been kept prisoner now these many years  
Against my will and justice.

PAULET. Madam, this  
Was a great favour, and without this grace  
You had not lived to see these days.

MARY STUART. How so?

PAULET. Seeing your own subjects did pursue you,  
and had  
The best in your own country.

MARY STUART. That is true,  
Because your Mildmay's ill persuasions first  
Made me discharge my forces, and then caused  
Mine enemies to burn my friends' main holds,  
Castles and houses.

PAULET. Howsoe'er, it was  
By great men of that country that the queen  
Had earnest suit made to her to have yourself  
Delivered to them, which her grace denied,  
And to their great misliking.

DRURY. Seventeen years  
She hath kept your life to save it: and whereas  
She calls your highness sister, she hath dealt  
In truth and deed most graciously with you  
And sisterlike, in seeking to preserve  
Your life at once and honour.

MARY STUART. Aye! wherein?

DRURY. In that commission of your causes held  
At York, which was at instance of your friends  
Dissolved to save your honour.

MARY STUART. No: the cause  
Why that commission was dissolved indeed

Was that my friends could not be heard to inform  
Against my loud accusers.

PAULET. But your friend  
The bishop's self of Ross, your very friend,  
Hath written that this meeting was dismissed  
All only in your favour: and his book  
Is extant: and this favour is but one  
Of many graces which her majesty  
Hath for mere love extended to you.

MARY STUART. This  
Is one great favour, even to have kept me here  
So many years against my will.

PAULET. It was  
For your own safety, seeing your countrymen  
Sought your destruction, and to that swift end  
Required to have you yielded up to them,  
As was before said.

MARY STUART. Nay, then, I will speak.  
I am not afraid. It was determined here  
That I should not depart: and when I was  
Demanded by my subjects, this I know,  
That my lord treasurer with his own close hand  
Writ in a packet which by trustier hands  
Was intercepted, and to me conveyed,  
To the earl of Murray, that the devil was tied  
Fast in a chain, and they could keep her not,  
But here she should be safely kept.

DRURY. That earl  
Was even as honourable a gentleman  
As I knew ever in that country bred.

MARY STUART. One of the worst men of the world  
he was:

You have conceived so hardly of the queen  
My mistress, that you still inveterately  
Interpret all her actions to the worst,  
Not knowing the truth of all the cause: but yet  
I dare assure you that her majesty  
Had most just cause and righteous, in respect  
As well of Calais as for other ends,  
To do the thing she did, and more to have done,  
Had it so pleased her to put forth her power:  
And this is in you great unthankfulness  
After so many favours and so great,  
Whereof you will acknowledge in no wise  
*The least of any: though her majesty*

Hath of her own grace merely saved your life,  
To the utter discontentment of the best  
Your subjects once in open parliament  
Who craved against you justice on the charge  
Of civil law-breach and rebellion.

MARY STUART.

I

Know no such matter, but full well I know  
Sir Francis Walsingham hath openly,  
Since his abiding last in Scotland, said  
That I should rue his entertainment there.

PAULET. Madam, you have not rued it, but have  
been

More honourably entertained than ever yet  
Was any other crown's competitor  
In any realm save only this: whereof  
Some have been kept close prisoners, other some  
Maimed and unnaturally disfigured, some  
Murdered.

MARY STUART. But I was no competitor:  
All I required was in successive right  
To be reputed but as next the crown.

PAULET. Nay, madam, you went further, when you  
gave

The English arms and style, as though our queen  
Had been but an usurper on your right.

MARY STUART. My husband and my kinsmen did  
therein

What they thought good: I had nought to do with it.

PAULET. Why would you not then loyally renounce  
Your claim herein pretended, but with such  
Condition, that you might be authorised  
Next heir apparent to the crown?

MARY STUART. I have made  
At sundry times thereon good proffers, which  
Could never be accepted.

PAULET. Heretofore  
It hath been proved unto you presently  
That in the very instant even of all  
Your treaties and most friendlike offers were  
Some dangerous crafts discovered.

MARY STUART. You must think  
I have some friends on earth, and if they have done  
Anything privily, what is that to me?

PAULET. Madam, it was somewhat to you, and I  
would  
For your own sake you had forborne it, that  
After advertisement and conscience given  
Of Morgan's devilish practice, to have killed  
A sacred queen, you yet would entertain  
The murderer as your servant.

MARY STUART. I might do it  
With as good right as ever did your queen  
So entertain my rebels.

DRURY. Be advised:  
This speech is very hard, and all the case  
Here differs greatly.

MARY STUART. Yea, let this then be;  
Ye cannot yet of my conviction say  
But I by partial judgment was condemned,  
And the commissioners knew my son could have  
No right, were I convicted, and your queen  
Could have no children of her womb; whereby  
They might set up what man for king they would.

PAULET. This is in you too great forgetfulness

Of honour and yourself, to charge these lords  
With two so foul and horrible faults, as first  
To take your life by partial doom from you,  
And then bestow the kingdom where they liked.

MARY STUART. Well, all is one to me: and for my  
part

I thank God I shall die without regret  
Of anything that I have done alive.

PAULET. I would entreat you yet be sorry at least  
For the great wrong, and well deserving grief,  
You have done the queen my mistress.

MARY STUART. Nay, thereon  
Let others answer for themselves: I have  
Nothing to do with it. Have you borne in mind  
Those matters of my monies that we last  
Conferred upon together?

PAULET. Madam, these  
Are not forgotten.

MARY STUART. Well it is if aught  
Be yet at all remembered for my good.  
Have here my letter sealed and superscribed,  
And so farewell—or even as here men may.

[*Exeunt PAULET and DRURY.*]

Had I that old strength in my weary limbs  
That in my heart yet fails not, fain would I  
Fare forth if not fare better. Tired I am,  
But not so lame in spirit I might not take  
Some comfort of the winter-wasted sun  
This bitter Christmas to me, though my feet  
Were now no firmer nor more helpful found  
Than when I went but in my chair abroad  
Last weary June at Chartley. I can stand



And go now without help of either side,  
And bend my hand again, thou seest, to write:  
I did not well perchance in sight of these  
To have made so much of this lame hand, which yet  
God knows was grievous to me, and to-day  
To make my letter up and superscribe  
And seal it with no outward show of pain  
Before their face and inquisition; yet  
I care not much in player's wise piteously  
To blind such eyes with feigning: though this Drew  
Be gentler and more gracious than his mate  
And liker to be wrought on; but at last  
What need have I of men?

MARY BEATON.                      What then you may  
I know not, seeing for all that was and is  
We are yet not at the last; but when you had,  
You have hardly failed to find more help of them  
And heartier service than more prosperous queens  
Exact of expectation: when your need  
Was greater than your name or natural state,  
And wage was none to look for but of death,  
As though the expectancy thereof and hope  
Were more than man's prosperities, men have given  
Heart's thanks to have this gift of God and you  
For dear life's guerdon, even the trust assured  
To drink for you the bitterness of death.

MARY STUART. Aye, one said once it must be—  
   some one said  
I must be perilous ever, and my love  
More deadly than my will was evil or good  
Toward any of all these that through me should  
die—

I know not who, nor when one said it: but  
I know too sure he lied not.

MARY BEATON.                      No; I think  
This was a seer indeed. I have heard of men  
That under imminence of death grew strong  
With mortal foresight, yet in life-days past  
Could see no foot before them, nor provide  
For their own fate or fortune anything  
Against one angry chance of accident  
Or passionate fault of their own loves or hates  
That might to death betray them: such an one  
Thus haply might have prophesied, and had  
No strength to save himself.

MARY STUART.                      I know not: yet  
Time was when I remembered.

MARY BEATON.                      It should be  
No enemy's saying whom you remember not;  
You are wont not to forget your enemies; yet  
The word rang sadder than a friend's should fall  
Save in some strange pass of the spirit or flesh  
For love's sake haply hurt to death.

MARY STUART.                      It seems  
Thy mind is bent to know the name of me  
That of myself I know not.

MARY BEATON.                      Nay, my mind  
Has other thoughts to beat upon: for me  
It may suffice to know the saying for true  
And never care who said it.

MARY STUART.                      True? too sure,  
God to mine heart's grief hath approved it. See,  
Nor Scot nor Englishman that takes on him  
The service of my sorrow but partakes

The sorrow of my service: man by man,  
As that one said, they perish of me: yea,  
Were I a sword sent upon earth, or plague  
Bred of aerial poison, I could be  
No deadlier where unwillingly I strike,  
Who where I would can hurt not: Percy died  
By his own hand in prison, Howard by law,  
These young men with strange torments done to death,  
Who should have rid me and the world of her  
That is our scourge, and to the church of God  
A pestilence that wastes it: all the north  
Wears yet the scars engraven of civil steel  
Since its last rising: nay, she saith but right,  
Mine enemy, saying by these her servile tongues  
I have brought upon her land mine own land's curse,  
And a sword follows at my heel, and fire  
Is kindled of mine eyeshot: and before,  
Whom did I love that died not of it? whom  
That I would save might I deliver, when  
I had once but looked on him with love, or pledged  
Friendship? I should have died I think long since,  
That many might have died not, and this word  
Had not been written of me nor fulfilled,  
But perished in the saying, a prophecy  
That took the prophet by the throat and slew—  
As sure I think it slew him. Such a song  
Might my poor servant slain before my face  
Have sung before the stroke of violent death  
Had fallen upon him there for my sake.

MARY BEATON.

Ah!

You think so? this remembrance was it not  
That hung and hovered in your mind but now,

Moved your heart backward all unwittingly  
To some blind memory of the man long dead?

MARY STUART. In sooth, I think my prophet should  
have been

David.

MARY BEATON. You thought of him?

MARY STUART. An old sad thought:  
The moan of it was made long since, and he  
Not unremembered.

MARY BEATON. Nay, of him indeed  
Record was made—a royal record: whence  
No marvel is it that you forgot not him.

MARY STUART. I would forget no friends nor enemies:  
these

More needs me now remember. Think'st thou not  
This woman hates me deadlier—or this queen  
That is not woman—than myself could hate  
Except I were as she in all things? then  
I should love no such woman as am I  
Much more than she may love me: yet I am sure,  
Or so near surety as all belief may be,  
She dare not slay me for her soul's sake: nay,  
Though that were made as light of as a leaf  
Storm-shaken, in such stormy winds of state  
As blow between us like a blast of death,  
For her throne's sake she durst not, which must be  
Broken to build my scaffold. Yet, God wot,  
Perchance a straw's weight now cast in by chance  
Might weigh my life down in the scale her hand  
Holds hardly straight for trembling: if she be  
Woman at all, so tempered naturally  
And with such spirit and sense as thou and I,

Should I for wrath so far forget myself  
As these men sometime charge me that I do,  
My tongue might strike my head off. By this head  
That yet I wear to swear by, if life be  
Thankworthy, God might well be thanked for this  
Of me or whoso loves me in the world,  
That I spake never half my heart out yet,  
For any sore temptation of them all,  
To her or hers; nor ever put but once  
My heart upon my paper, writing plain  
The things I thought, heard, knew for truth of  
her,

Believed or feigned—nay, feigned not to believe  
Of her fierce follies fed with wry-mouthed praise,  
And that vain ravin of her sexless lust  
Which could not feed nor hide its hunger, curb  
With patience nor allay with love the thirst  
That mocked itself as all mouths mocked it. Ha,  
What might the reading of these truths have wrought  
Within her maiden mind, what seed have sown,  
Trow'st thou, in her sweet spirit, of revenge  
Toward me that showed her queenship in the glass  
A subject's hand of hers had put in mine  
The likeness of it loathed and laughable  
As they that worshipped it with words and signs  
Beheld her and bemocked her?

MARY BEATON. Certainly,  
I think that soul drew never breath alive  
To whom this letter might seem pardonable  
Which timely you forbore to send her.

MARY STUART. Nay,  
I doubt not I did well to keep it back—

And did not ill to write it: for God knows  
It was no small ease to my heart.

MARY BEATON. But say  
I had not burnt it as you bade me burn,  
But kept it privily safe against a need  
That I might haply sometime have of it?

MARY STUART. What, to destroy me?

MARY BEATON. Hardly, sure, to save.

MARY STUART. Why shouldst thou think to bring  
me to my death?

MARY BEATON. Indeed, no man am I that love you;  
nor

Need I go therefore in such fear of you  
As of my mortal danger.

MARY STUART. On my life,  
(Long life or short, with gentle or violent end,  
I know not, and would choose not, though I might  
So take God's office on me) one that heard  
Would swear thy speech had in it, and subtly  
mixed,

A savour as of menace, or a sound  
As of an imminent ill or perilous sense  
Which was not in thy meaning.

MARY BEATON. No: in mine  
There lurked no treason ever; nor have you  
Cause to think worse of me than loyally,  
If proof may be believed on witness.

MARY STUART. Sure,  
I think I have not nor I should not have:  
Thy life has been the shadow cast of mine,  
A present faith to serve my present need,

*Chastelard and Mary Stuart.*

A foot behind my footsteps; as long since  
In those French dances that we trod, and laughed  
The blithe way through together. Thou couldst sing  
Then, and a great while gone it is by this  
Since I heard song or music: I could now  
Find in my heart to bid thee, as the Jews  
Were once bid sing in their captivity  
One of their songs of Sion, sing me now,  
If one thou knowest, for love of that far time,  
One of our songs of Paris.

MARY BEATON.

Give me leave

A little to cast up some wandering words  
And gather back such memories as may beat  
About my mind of such a song, and yet  
I think I might renew some note long dumb  
That once your ear allowed of.—I did pray, [*Aside.*  
Tempt me not, God: and by her mouth again  
He tempts me—nay, but prompts me, being most  
just,

To know by trial if all remembrance be  
Dead as remorse or pity that in birth  
Died, and were childless in her: if she quite  
Forget that very swan-song of thy love,  
My love that wast, my love that wouldst not be,  
Let God forget her now at last as I  
Remember: if she think but one soft thought,  
Cast one poor word upon thee, God thereby  
Shall surely bid me let her live: if none,  
I shoot that letter home and sting her dead.  
God strengthen me to sing but these words through  
Though I fall dumb at end for ever. Now—

[*She sings.*

*Après tant de jours, après tant de pleurs,  
Soyez secourable à mon âme en peine.  
Voyez comme Avril fait l'amour aux fleurs;  
Dame d'amour, dame aux belles couleurs,  
Dieu vous a fait belle, Amour vous fait reine.*

*Rions, je t'en prie; aimons, je le veux.  
Le temps fuit et rit et ne revient guère  
Pour baiser le bout de tes blonds cheveux,  
Pour baiser tes cils, ta bouche et tes yeux;  
L'amour n'a qu'un jour auprès de sa mère.*

MARY STUART. Nay, I should once have known that  
song, thou say'st,  
And him that sang it and should now be dead:  
Was it—but his rang sweeter—was it not  
Remy Belleau?

MARY BEATON. (My letter—here at heart!) [*Aside.*]  
I think it might be—were it better writ  
And courtlier phrased, with Latin spice cast in,  
And a more tunable descant.

MARY STUART. Aye; how sweet  
Sang all the world about those stars that sang  
With Ronsard for the strong mid star of all,  
His bay-bound head all glorious with grey hairs,  
Who sang my birth and bridal! When I think  
Of those French years, I only seem to see  
A light of swords and singing, only hear  
Laughter of love and lovely stress of lutes,  
And in between the passion of them borne  
Sound of swords crossing ever, as of feet  
Dancing, and life and death still equally



Blithe and bright-eyed from battle. Haply now  
 My sometime sister, mad Queen Madge, is grown  
 As grave as I should be, and wears at waist  
 No hearts of last year's lovers any more  
 Enchased for jewels round her girdlestead,  
 But rather beads for penitence; yet I doubt  
 Time should not more abash her heart than mine,  
 Who live not heartless yet. These days like those  
 Have power but for a season given to do  
 No more upon our spirits than they may,  
 And what they may we know not till it be  
 Done, and we need no more take thought of it,  
 As I no more of death or life to-day.

MARY BEATON. That shall you surely need not.

MARY STUART. So I think,

Our keepers being departed: and by these,  
 Even by the uncourtlier as the gentler man,  
 I read as in a glass their queen's plain heart,  
 And that by her at last I shall not die.

### SCENE III.—*Greenwich Palace.*

QUEEN ELIZABETH *and* DAVISON.

ELIZABETH. Thou hast seen Lord Howard? I bade  
 him send thee.

DAVISON. Madam,

But now he came upon me hard at hand  
 And by your gracious message bade me in.

ELIZABETH. The day is fair as April: hast thou been  
 Abroad this morning? 'Tis no winter's sun.

That makes these trees forget their nakedness  
And all the glittering ground, as 'twere in hope,  
Breathe laughingly.

DAVISON. Indeed, the gracious air  
Had drawn me forth into the park, and thence  
Comes my best speed to attend upon your grace.

ELIZABETH. My grace is not so gracious as the sun  
That graces thus the late distempered air:  
And you should oftener use to walk abroad,  
Sir, than your custom is: I would not have  
Good servants heedless of their natural health  
To do me sickly service. It were strange  
That one twice bound as woman and as queen  
To care for good men's lives and loyalties  
Should prove herself toward either dangerous.

DAVISON. That  
Can be no part of any servant's fear  
Who lives for service of your majesty.

ELIZABETH. I would not have it be—God else for-  
bid—  
Who have so loyal servants as I hold  
All now that bide about me: for I will not  
Think, though such villainy once were in men's minds,  
That twice among mine English gentlemen  
Shall hearts be found so foul as theirs who thought,  
When I was horsed for hunting, to waylay  
And shoot me through the back at unawares  
With poisoned bullets: nor, thou knowest, would I,  
When this was opened to me, take such care,  
Ride so fenced round about with iron guard,  
Or walk so warily as men counselled me  
For loyal fear of what thereafter might

More prosperously be plotted: nay, God knows,  
I would not hold on such poor terms my life,  
With such a charge upon it, as to breathe  
In dread of death or treason till the day  
That they should stop my trembling breath, and ease  
The piteous heart that panted like a slave's  
Of all vile fear for ever. So to live  
Were so much hatefuller than thus to die,  
I do not think that man or woman draws  
Base breath of life the loathsomest on earth  
Who by such purchase of perpetual fear  
And deathless doubt of all in trust of none  
Would shudderingly prolong it.

DAVISON. Even too well  
Your servants know that greatness of your heart  
Which gives you yet unguarded to men's eyes,  
And were unworthier found to serve or live  
Than is the unworthiest of them, did not this  
Make all their own hearts hotter with desire  
To be the bulwark or the price of yours  
Paid to redeem it from the arrest of death.

ELIZABETH. So haply should they be whose hearts  
beat true  
With loyal blood: but whoso says they are  
Is but a loving liar.

DAVISON. I trust your grace  
Hath in your own heart no such doubt of them  
As speaks in mockery through your lips.

ELIZABETH. By God,  
I say much less than righteous truth might speak  
Of their loud loves that ring with emptiness,  
And hollow-throated loyalties whose heart

Is wind and clamorous promise. Ye desire,  
With all your souls ye swear that ye desire  
The queen of Scots were happily removed,  
And not a knave that loves me will put hand  
To the enterprise ye look for only of me  
Who only would forbear it.

DAVISON. If your grace  
Be minded yet it shall be done at all,  
The way that were most honourable and just  
Were safest, sure, and best.

ELIZABETH. I dreamt last night  
Our murderess there in hold had tasted death  
By execution of the sentence done  
That was pronounced upon her; and the news  
So stung my heart with wrath to hear of it  
That had I had a sword—look to 't, and 'ware!—  
I had thrust it through thy body.

DAVISON. God defend!  
'Twas well I came not in your highness' way  
While the hot mood was on you. But indeed  
I would know soothly if your mind be changed  
From its late root of purpose.

ELIZABETH. No, by God:  
But I were fain it could be somewise done  
And leave the blame not on me. And so much,  
If there were love and honesty in one  
Whom I held faithful and exact of care,  
Should easily be performed; but here I find  
This dainty fellow so precise a knave  
As will take all things dangerous on his tongue  
And nothing on his hand: hot-mouthed and large  
In zeal to stuff mine ears with promises,

But perjurous in performance: did he not  
Set hand among you to the bond whereby  
He is bound at utmost hazard of his life  
To do me such a service? Yet I could  
Have wrought as well without him, had I wist  
Of this faint falsehood in his heart: there is  
That Wingfield whom thou wot'st of, would have done  
With glad goodwill what I required of him,  
And made no Puritan mouths on't.

DAVISON.

Madam, yet

Far better were it all should but be done  
By line of law and judgment.

ELIZABETH.

There be men

Wiser than thou that see this otherwise.

DAVISON. All is not wisdom that of wise men  
comes,

Nor are all eyes that search the ways of state  
Clear as a just man's conscience.

ELIZABETH.

Proverbs! ha?

Who made thee master of these sentences,  
Prime tongue of ethics and philosophy?

DAVISON. An honest heart to serve your majesty;  
Nought else nor subtler in its reach of wit  
Than very simpleness of meaning.

ELIZABETH.

Nay,

I do believe thee; heartily I do.  
Did my lord admiral not desire thee bring  
The warrant for her execution?

DAVISON.

Aye,

Madam; here is it.

ELIZABETH.

I would it might not be,  
Or being so just were yet not necessary.

Art thou not heartily sorry—wouldst thou not,  
I say, be sad—to see me sign it?

DAVISON.

Madam,

I grieve at any soul's mishap that lives,  
And specially for shipwreck of a life  
To you so near allied: but seeing this doom  
Wrung forth from justice by necessity,  
I had rather guilt should bleed than innocence.

ELIZABETH. When I shall sign, take thou this instantly  
To the lord chancellor; see it straight be sealed  
As quietly as he may, not saying a word,  
That no man come to know it untimely: then  
Send it to the earls of Kent and Shrewsbury  
Who are here set down to see this justice done:  
I would no more be troubled with this coil  
Till all be through. But, for the place of doom,  
The hall there of the castle, in my mind,  
Were fitter than the court or open green.  
And as thou goest betake thee on thy way  
To Walsingham, where he lies sick at home,  
And let him know what hath of us been done:  
Whereof the grief, I fear me, shall go near  
To kill his heart outright.

DAVISON.

Your majesty

Hath yet not signed the warrant.

ELIZABETH.

Ha! God's blood

Art thou from tutor of philosophy late  
Grown counsellor too and more than counsellor,  
To appoint me where and what this hand of mine  
Shall at thy beck obsequiously subscribe  
And follow on thy finger? By God's death,  
What if it please me now not sign at all?

This letter of my kinswoman's last writ  
Hath more compulsion in it, and more power  
To enforce my pity, than a thousand tongues  
Dictating death against her in mine ear  
Of mine own vassal subjects. Here but now  
She writes me she thanks God with all her heart  
That it hath pleased him by the mean of me  
To make an end of her life's pilgrimage,  
Which hath been weary to her: and doth not ask  
To see its length drawn longer, having had  
Too much experience of its bitterness:  
But only doth entreat me, since she may  
Look for no favour at their zealous hands  
Who are first in councils of my ministry,  
That only I myself will grant her prayers;  
Whereof the first is, since she cannot hope  
For English burial with such Catholic rites  
As here were used in time of the ancient kings,  
Mine ancestors and hers, and since the tombs  
Lie violated in Scotland of her sires,  
That so soon ever as her enemies  
Shall with her innocent blood be satiated,  
Her body by her servants may be borne  
To some ground consecrated, there to be  
Interred: and rather, she desires, in France,  
Where sleep her honoured mother's ashes; so  
At length may her poor body find the rest  
Which living it has never known: thereto,  
She prays me, from the fears she hath of those  
To whose harsh hand I have abandoned her,  
She may not secretly be done to death,  
But in her servants' sight and others', who

May witness her obedience kept and faith  
To the true church, and guard her memory safe  
From slanders haply to be blown abroad  
Concerning her by mouths of enemies: last,  
She asks that her attendants, who so well  
And faithfully through all her miseries past  
Have served her, may go freely where they please,  
And lose not those small legacies of hers  
Which poverty can yet bequeath to them.  
This she conjures me by the blood of Christ,  
Our kinship, and my grandsire's memory,  
Who was her father's grandsire and a king,  
And by the name of queen she bears with her  
Even to the death, that I will not refuse,  
And that a word in mine own hand may thus  
Assure her, who will then as she hath lived  
Die mine affectionate sister and prisoner. See,  
Howe'er she have sinned, what heart were mine, if this  
Drew no tears from me: not the meanest soul  
That lives most miserable but with such words  
Must needs draw down men's pity.

DAVISON.                      Sure it is,  
This queen hath skill of writing: and her hand  
Hath manifold eloquence with various voice  
To express discourse of sirens or of snakes,  
A mermaid's or a monster's, uttering best  
All music or all malice. Here is come  
A letter writ long since of hers to you  
From Sheffield Castle, which for shame or fear  
She durst not or she would not thence despatch,  
Sent secretly to me from Fotheringay,  
Not from her hand, but with her own hand writ,



So foul of import and malignity  
I durst not for your majesty's respect  
With its fierce infamies afire from hell  
Offend your gracious eyesight: but because  
Your justice by your mercy's ignorant hand  
Hath her fair eyes put out, and walks now blind  
Even by the pit's edge deathward, pardon me  
If what you never should have seen be shown  
By hands that rather would take fire in hand  
Than lay in yours this writing. [*Gives her a letter.*]

ELIZABETH.

By this light,

Whate'er be here, thou hadst done presumptuously,  
And Walsingham thy principal, to keep  
Aught from mine eyes that being to me designed  
Might even with most offence enlighten them.  
Here is her hand indeed; and she takes up [*Reading.*]  
In gracious wise enough the charge imposed  
By promise on her and desire of ours,  
How loth soe'er she be, regretfully  
To bring such things in question of discourse  
Yet with no passion but sincerity,  
As God shall witness her, declares to us  
What our good lady of Shrewsbury said to her  
Touching ourself in terms ensuing; whereto  
Answering she chid this dame for such belief  
And reprehended for licentious tongue  
To speak so lewdly of us: which herself  
Believes not, knowing the woman's natural heart  
And evil will as then to usward. Here  
She writes no more than I would well believe  
Of her as of the countess. Ha!

DAVISON.

Your grace

Shall but defile and vex your eyes and heart  
To read these villainies through.

ELIZABETH.

God's death, man! peace:

Thou wert not best incense me toward thine own,  
Whose eyes have been before me in them. What!  
Was she not mad to write this? *One that had*  
*Your promise—lay with you times numberless—*  
*All license and all privateness that may*  
*Be used of wife and husband!* yea, of her  
And more dead men than shame remembers. *God*  
*Shall stand her witness*—with the devil of hell  
For sponsor to her vows, whose spirit in her  
Begot himself this issue. Ha, the duke!  
—Nay, God shall give me patience—and his knave,  
And Hatton—God have mercy! nay, but hate,  
Hate and constraint and rage have wrecked her wits,  
And continence of life cut off from lust,  
—This common stale of Scotland, that has tried  
The sins of three rank nations, and consumed  
Their veins whose life she took not—Italy,  
France that put half this poison in her blood,  
And her own kingdom that being sick therewith  
Vomited out on ours the venomous thing  
Whose head we set not foot on—but may God  
Make my fame fouler through the world than hers  
And ranker in men's record, if I spare  
The she-wolf that I saved, the woman-beast,  
Wolf-woman—how the Latin rings we know,  
And what lewd lair first reared her, and whose hand  
Writ broad across the Louvre and Holyrood  
*Lupanar*—but no brothel ever bred  
Or breathed so rank a soul's infection, spawned

Or spat such foulness in God's face and man's  
Or festered in such falsehood as her breath  
Strikes honour sick with, and the spirit of shame  
Dead as her fang shall strike herself, and send  
The serpent that corruption calls her soul  
To vie strange venoms with the worm of hell  
And make the face of darkness and the grave  
Blush hotter with the fires wherein that soul  
Sinks deeper than damnation.

DAVISON.

Let your grace

Think only that but now the thing is known  
And self-discovered which too long your love  
Too dangerously hath cherished; and forget  
All but that end which yet remains for her,  
That right by pity be not overcome.

ELIZABETH. God pity so my soul as I do right,  
And show me no more grace alive or dead  
Than I do justice here. Give me again  
That warrant I put by, being foolish: yea,  
Thy word spake sooth—my soul's eyes were put out—  
I could not see for pity. Thou didst well—  
I am bounden to thee heartily—to cure  
My sight of this distemper, and my soul.  
Here in God's sight I set mine hand, who thought  
Never to take this thing upon it, nor  
Do God so bitter service. Take this hence:  
And let me see no word nor hear of her  
Till the sun see not such a soul alive.

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.  
MARY STUART.

SCENE I.—*Mary's Chamber in Fotheringay Castle.*

MARY STUART and MARY BEATON.

MARY STUART (*sings*).

*O Lord my God,  
I have trusted in thee;  
O Jesu my dearest one,  
Now set me free.  
In prison's oppression,  
In sorrow's obsession,  
I weary for thee.  
With sighing and crying  
Bowed down as dying,  
I adore thee, I implore thee, set me free!*

Free are the dead: yet fain I would have had  
Once, before all captivity find end,  
Some breath of freedom living. These that come,  
I think, with no such message, must not find,  
For all this lameness of my limbs, a heart  
As maimed in me with sickness. Three years gone  
When last I parted from the earl marshal's charge,  
I did not think to see his face again

Turned on me as his prisoner. Now his wife  
Will take no jealousy more to hear of it,  
I trust, albeit we meet not as unfriends,  
If it be mortal news he brings me. Go,  
If I seem ready, as meseems I should,  
And well arrayed to bear myself indeed  
None otherwise than queenlike in their sight,  
Bid them come in.

[*Exit MARY BEATON.*]

I cannot tell at last  
If it be fear or hope that should expect  
Death: I have had enough of hope, and fear  
Was none of my familiars while I lived  
Such life as had more pleasant things to lose  
Than death or life may now divide me from.  
'Tis not so much to look upon the sun  
With eyes that may not lead us where we will,  
And halt behind the footless flight of hope  
With feet that may not follow: nor were aught  
So much, of all things life may think to have,  
That one not cowardly born should find it worth  
The purchase of so base a price as this,  
To stand self-shamed as coward. I do not think  
This is mine end that comes upon me: but  
I had liefer far it were than, were it not,  
That ever I should fear it.

*Enter KENT, SHREWSBURY, BEALE, and Sheriff.*

Sirs, good day:

With such good heart as prisoners have, I bid  
You and your message welcome.

KENT.

Madam, this

The secretary of the council here hath charge  
To read as their commission.

MARY STUART.                      Let me hear  
In as brief wise as may beseem the time  
The purport of it.

BEALE. Our commission here  
Given by the council under the great seal  
Pronounces on your head for present doom  
Death, by this written sentence.

MARY STUART.                       Aye, my lords?  
May I believe this, and not hold myself  
Mocked as a child with shadows? In God's name,  
Speak you, my lord of Shrewsbury: let me know  
If this be dream or waking.

KENT. Verily,  
No dream it is, nor dreamers we that pray,  
Madam, you meetly would prepare yourself  
To stand before God's judgment presently.

MARY STUART. I had rather so than ever stand again  
Before the face of man's. Why speak not you,  
To whom I speak, my lord earl marshal? Nay,  
Look not so heavily: by my life, he stands  
As one at point to weep. Why, good my lord,  
To know that none may swear by Mary's life  
And hope again to find belief of man  
Upon so slight a warrant, should not bring  
This trouble on your eyes; look up, and say  
The word you have for her that never was  
Less than your friend, and prisoner.

SHREWSBURY.

None save this,

Which willingly I would not speak, I may;  
That presently your time is come to die.

MARY STUART. Why, then, I am well content to leave a world

Wherein I am no more serviceable at all  
To God or man, and have therein so long  
Endured so much affliction. All my life  
I have ever earnestly desired the love  
And friendship of your queen; have warned her oft  
Of coming dangers; and have cherished long  
The wish that I but once might speak with her  
In plain-souled confidence; being well assured,  
Had we but once met, there an end had been  
Of jealousies between us: but our foes,  
With equal wrong toward either, treacherously  
Have kept us still in sunder: by whose craft  
And crooked policy hath my sister's crown  
Fallen in great peril, and myself have been  
Imprisoned, and inveterately maligned,  
And here must now be murdered. But I know  
That only for my faith's sake I must die,  
And this to know for truth is recompense  
As large as all my sufferings. For the crime  
Wherewith I am charged, upon this holy book  
I lay mine hand for witness of my plea,  
I am wholly ignorant of it; and solemnly  
Declare that never yet conspiracy  
Devised against the queen my sister's life  
Took instigation or assent from me.

KENT. You swear but on a popish Testament:  
Such oaths are all as worthless as the book.

MARY STUART. I swear upon the book wherein I  
trust:

Would you give rather credit to mine oath  
Sworn on your scriptures that I trust not in?

KENT. Madam, I fain would have you heartily

Renounce your superstition; toward which end  
With us the godly dean of Peterborough,  
Good Richard Fletcher, well approved for faith  
Of God and of the queen, is hither come  
To proffer you his prayerful ministry.

MARY STUART. If you, my lords, or he will pray  
for me,

I shall be thankful for your prayers; but may not  
With theirs that hold another faith-mix mine.  
I pray you therefore that mine almoner may  
Have leave to attend on me, that from his hands  
I, having made confession, may receive  
The sacrament.

KENT. We may not grant you this.

MARY STUART. I shall not see my chaplain ere I die?  
But two months gone this grace was granted me  
By word expressly from your queen, to have  
Again his ministration: and at last  
In the utter hour and bitter strait of death  
Is this denied me?

KENT. Madam, for your soul  
More meet it were to cast these mummeries out  
And bear Christ only in your heart, than serve  
With ceremonies of ritual hand and tongue  
His mere idolatrous likeness.

MARY STUART. This were strange,  
That I should bear him visible in my hand  
Or keep with lips and knees his titular rites  
And cast in heart no thought upon him. Nay,  
Put me, I pray, to no more argument:  
But if this least thing be not granted, yet  
Grant me to know the season of my death.



SHREWSBURY. At eight by dawn to-morrow you must die.

MARY STUART. So shall I hardly see the sun again.  
By dawn to-morrow? meanest men condemned  
Give not their lives' breath up so suddenly:  
Howbeit, I had rather yield you thanks, who make  
Such brief end of the bitterness of death  
For me who have borne such bitter length of life,  
Than plead with protestation of appeal  
For half a piteous hour's remission: nor  
Henceforward shall I be denied of man  
Aught, who may never now crave aught again  
But whence is no denial. Yet shall this  
Not easily be believed of men, nor find  
In foreign ears acceptance, that a queen  
Should be thrust out of life thus. Good my friend,  
Bid my physician Gorion come to me:  
I have to speak with him—sirs, with your leave—  
Of certain monies due to me in France.  
What, shall I twice desire your leave, my lords,  
To live these poor last hours of mine alive  
At peace among my friends? I have much to do,  
And little time wherein to do it is left.

SHREWSBURY (*to Kent apart*). I pray she may not  
mean worse than I would  
Against herself ere morning.

KENT. Let not then  
This French knave's drugs come near her, nor himself:  
We will take order for it.

SHREWSBURY. Nay, this were but  
To exasperate more her thwarted heart, and make  
Despair more desperate than itself. Pray God

She be not minded to compel us put  
Force at the last upon her of men's hands  
To hale her violently to death, and make  
Judgment look foul and fierce as murder's face  
With stain of strife and passion.

[*Exeunt all but MARY STUART and MARY BEATON.*]

MARY STUART.                      So, my friend,  
The last of all our Maries are you left  
To-morrow. Strange has been my life, and now  
Strange looks my death upon me: yet, albeit  
Nor the hour nor manner of it be mine to choose,  
Ours is it yet, and all men's in the world,  
To make death welcome in what wise we will.  
Bid you my chaplain, though he see me not,  
Watch through the night and pray for me: perchance,  
When ere the sundawn they shall bring me forth,  
I may behold him, and upon my knees  
Receive his blessing. Let our supper be  
Served earlier in than wont was: whereunto  
I bid my true poor servants here, to take  
Farewell and drink at parting to them all  
The cup of my last kindness, in good hope  
They shall stand alway constant in their faith  
And dwell in peace together: thereupon  
What little store is left me will I share  
Among them, and between my girls divide  
My wardrobe and my jewels severally,  
Reserving but the black robe and the red  
That shall attire me for my death: and last  
With mine own hand shall be my will writ out  
And all memorials more set down therein  
That I would leave for legacies of love

To my next kinsmen and my household folk.  
And to the king my brother yet of France  
Must I write briefly, but a word to say  
I am innocent of the charge whereon I die  
Now for my right's sake claimed upon this crown,  
And our true faith's sake, but am barred from sigh  
Even of mine almoner here, though hard at hand;  
And I would bid him take upon his charge  
The keeping of my servants, as I think  
He shall not for compassionate shame refuse  
Albeit his life be softer than his heart;  
And in religion for a queen's soul pray  
That once was styled Most Christian, and is now  
In the true faith about to die, deprived  
Of all her past possessions. But this most  
And first behoves it, that the king of Spain  
By Gorion's word of mouth receive my heart,  
Who soon shall stand before him. Bid the leech  
Come hither, and alone, to speak with me.

[Exit MARY BEATON.]

She is dumb as death: yet never in her life  
Hath she been quick of tongue. For all the rest,  
Poor souls, how well they love me, all as well  
I think I know: and one of them or twain  
At least may surely see me to my death  
Ere twice the hours have changed again. Perchance  
Love that can weep not would the gladlier die  
For those it cannot weep on. Time wears thin:  
They should not now play laggard: nay, he comes,  
The last that ever speaks alone with me  
Before my soul shall speak alone with God.

Enter GORION.

I have sent once more for you to no such end  
As sick men for physicians: no strong drug  
May put the death next morning twelve hours back  
Whose twilight overshadows me, that am  
Nor sick nor medicinable. Let me know  
If I may lay the last of all my trust  
On you that ever shall be laid on man  
To prove him kind and loyal.

GORION. So may God  
Deal with me, madam, as I prove to you  
Faithful, though none but I were in the world  
That you might trust beside.

MARY STUART. With equal heart  
Do I believe and thank you. I would send  
To Paris for the ambassador from Spain  
This letter with two diamonds, which your craft  
For me must cover from men's thievish eyes  
Where they may be not looked for.

GORION. Easily  
Within some molten drug may these be hid,  
And faithfully by me conveyed to him.

MARY STUART. The lesser of them shall he keep in  
sign  
Of my good friendship toward himself: but this  
In token to King Philip shall he give  
That for the truth I die, and dying commend  
To him my friends and servants, Gilbert Curle,  
His sister, and Jane Kennedy, who shall  
To-night watch by me; and my ladies all  
That have endured my prison: let him not  
Forget from his good favour one of these  
That I remember to him: Charles Arundel,

And either banished Paget; one whose heart  
Was better toward my service than his hand,  
Morgan: and of mine exiles for their faith,  
The prelates first of Glasgow and of Ross;  
And Liggons and Throgmorton, that have lost  
For me their leave to live on English earth;  
And Westmoreland, that lives now more forlorn  
Than died that earl who rose for me with him.  
These I beseech him favour for my sake  
Still: and forget not, if he come again  
To rule as king in England, one of them  
That were mine enemies here: the treasurer first,  
And Leicester, Walsingham, and Huntingdon,  
At Tutbury once my foe, fifteen years gone,  
And Wade that spied upon me three years since,  
And Paulet here my gaoler: set them down  
For him to wreak wrath's utmost justice on,  
In my revenge remembered. Though I be  
Dead, let him not forsake his hope to reign  
Upon this people: with my last breath left  
I make this last prayer to him, that not the less  
He will maintain the invasion yet designed  
Of us before on England: let him think,  
It is God's quarrel, and on earth a cause  
Well worthy of his greatness: which being won,  
Let him forget no man of these nor me.  
And now will I lie down, that four hours' sleep  
May give me strength before I sleep again  
And need take never thought for waking more.

SCENE II.—*The Presence Chamber.*

SHREWSBURY, KENT, PAULET, DRURY, MELVILLE,  
*and Attendants.*

KENT. The stroke is past of eight.

SHREWSBURY. Not far, my lord.

KENT. What stays the provost and the sheriff  
yet

That went ere this to bring the prisoner forth?  
What, are her doors locked inwards? then perchance  
Our last night's auguries of some close design  
By death contrived of her self-slaughterous hand  
To baffle death by justice hit but right  
The heart of her bad purpose.

SHREWSBURY. Fear it not:  
See where she comes, a queenlier thing to see  
Than whom such thoughts take hold on.

*Enter MARY STUART, led by two gentlemen and preceded  
by the Sheriff; MARY BEATON, BARBARA MOWBRAY,  
and other ladies behind, who remain in the doorway.*

MELVILLE (*kneeling to MARY*). Woe am I,  
Madam, that I must bear to Scotland back  
Such tidings watered with such tears as these.

MARY STUART. Weep not, good Melville: rather  
should your heart  
Rejoice that here an end is come at last  
Of Mary Stuart's long sorrows; for be sure  
That all this world is only vanity.  
And this record I pray you make of me,  
That a true woman to my faith I die,

And true to Scotland and to France: but God  
Forgive them that have long desired mine end  
And with false tongues have thirsted for my blood  
As the hart thirsteth for the water-brooks.  
O God, who art truth, and the author of all truth,  
Thou knowest the extreme recesses of my heart,  
And how that I was willing all my days  
That England should with Scotland be fast friends.  
Commend me to my son: tell him that I  
Have nothing done to prejudice his rights  
As king: and now, good Melville, fare thee well.  
My lord of Kent, whence comes it that your charge  
Hath bidden back my women there at door  
Who fain to the end would bear me company?

KENT. Madam, this were not seemly nor discreet,  
That these should so have leave to vex men's ears  
With cries and loose lamentings: haply too  
They might in superstition seek to dip  
Their handkerchiefs for relics in your blood.

MARY STUART. That will I pledge my word they  
shall not. Nay,  
The queen would surely not deny me this,  
The poor last thing that I shall ask on earth.  
Even a far meaner person dying I think  
She would not have so handled. Sir, you know  
I am her cousin, of her grandsire's blood,  
A queen of France by marriage, and by birth  
Anointed queen of Scotland. My poor girls  
Desire no more than but to see me die.

SHREWSBURY. Madam, you have leave to elect of  
this your train  
Two ladies with four men to go with you.

MARY STUART. I choose from forth my Scottish  
following here  
Jane Kennedy, with Elspeth Curle: of men,  
Bourgoin and Gorion shall attend on me,  
Gervais and Didier. Come then, let us go.

[*Exeunt: manent* MARY BEATON and BARBARA  
MOWBRAY.

BARBARA. I wist I was not worthy, though my child  
It is that her own hands made Christian: but  
I deemed she should have bid you go with her.  
Alas, and would not all we die with her?

MARY BEATON. Why, from the gallery here at hand  
your eyes  
May go with her along the hall beneath  
Even to the scaffold: and I fain would hear  
What fain I would not look on. Pray you, then,  
If you may bear to see it as those below,  
Do me that sad good service of your eyes  
For mine to look upon it, and declare  
All that till all be done I will not see;  
I pray you of your pity.

BARBARA.                    Though mine heart  
Break, it shall not for fear forsake the sight  
That may be faithful yet in following her,  
Nor yet for grief refuse your prayer, being fain  
To give your love such bitter comfort, who  
So long have never left her.

MARY BEATON.            Till she die—  
I have ever known I shall not till she die.  
See you yet aught? if I hear spoken words,  
My heart can better bear these pulses, else  
Unbearable, that rend it.



**Yea, I see**

Stand in mid hall the scaffold, black as death,  
And black the block upon it: all around,  
Against the throng a guard of halberdiers;  
And the axe against the scaffold-rail reclined,  
And two men masked on either hand beyond:  
And hard behind the block a cushion set,  
Black, as the chair behind it.

**When I saw**

Fallen on a scaffold once a young man's head,  
Such things as these I saw not. Nay, but on:  
I knew not that I spake: and toward your ears  
Indeed I spake not.

**All those faces change;**

She comes more royally than ever yet  
Fell foot of man triumphant on this earth,  
Imperial more than empire made her, born  
Enthroned as queen sat never. Not a line  
Stirs of her sovereign feature: like a bride  
Brought home she mounts the scaffold; and her eyes  
Sweep regal round the cirque beneath, and rest,  
Subsiding with a smile. She sits, and they,  
The doomsmen earls, beside her; at her left  
The sheriff, and the clerk at hand on high,  
To read the warrant.

None stands there but knows

What things therein are writ against her: God  
Knows what therein is writ not. God forgive  
All.

BARBARA. Not a face there breathes of all the throng  
But is more moved than hers to hear this read,  
Whose look alone is changed not.

MARY BEATON.                                        Once I knew  
A face that changed not in as dire an hour  
More than the queen's face changes. Hath he not  
Ended?

BARBARA. You cannot hear them speak below:  
Come near and hearken; bid not me repeat  
All.

MARY BEATON. I beseech you—for I may not come.

BARBARA. Now speaks Lord Shrewsbury but a word  
or twain,  
And brieflier yet she answers, and stands up  
As though to kneel, and pray.

MARY BEATON. I too have prayed—  
God hear at last her prayers not less than mine,  
Which failed not, sure, of hearing.

BARBARA. Now draws nigh  
That heretic priest, and bows himself, and thrice  
Strives, as a man that sleeps in pain, to speak,  
Stammering: she waves him by, as one whose prayers  
She knows may nought avail her: now she kneels,  
And the earls rebuke her, and she answers not,  
Kneeling. O Christ, whose likeness there engraved  
She strikes against her bosom, hear her! Now  
That priest lifts up his voice against her prayer,  
Praying: and a voice all round goes up with his:  
But hers is lift up higher than climbs their cry,  
In the great psalms of penitence: and now  
She prays aloud in English; for the Pope  
Our father, and his church; and for her son,  
And for the queen her murderess; and that God  
May turn from England yet his wrath away;  
*And so forgives her enemies; and implores*

High intercession of the saints with Christ,  
Whom crucified she kisses on his cross,  
And crossing now her breast—Ah, heard you not?  
*Even as thine arms were spread upon the cross,*  
*So make thy grace, O Jesus, wide for me,*  
*Receive me to thy mercy so, and so*  
*Forgive my sins.*

MARY BEATON. So be it, if so God please.  
Is she not risen up yet?

BARBARA. Yea, but mine eyes  
Darken: because those deadly twain close masked  
Draw nigh as men that crave forgiveness, which  
Gently she grants: *for now*, she said, *I hope*  
*You shall end all my troubles.* Now meseems  
They would put hand upon her as to help,  
And disarray her raiment: but she smiles—  
Heard you not that? can you nor hear nor speak,  
Poor heart, for pain? *Truly*, she said, *my lords,*  
*I never had such chamber-grooms before*  
*As these to wait on me.*

MARY BEATON. An end, an end.

BARBARA. Now come those twain upon the scaffold u  
Whom she preferred before us: and she lays  
Her crucifix down, which now the headsmen takes  
Into his cursed hand, but being rebuked  
Puts back for shame that sacred spoil of hers.  
And now they lift her veil up from her head  
Softly, and softly draw the black robe off,  
And all in red as of a funeral flame  
She stands up statelier yet before them, tall  
And clothed as if with sunset: and she takes  
From Elspeth's hand the crimson sleeves, and draws

